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THE CAMPAIGN OF 1870-1.

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Τρῶες μὲν κλαγγῇ τ' ἐνοπῇ τ' ἴσαν, ὄρνιθες ὡς,
Οἱ δ' ἄρ' ἴσαν σιγῇ μένεα πνείοντες Ἀχαιοὶ
Ἐν θυμῷ μεμαῶτες ἀλεξέμεν ἀλλήλοισιν.

HOMER.

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DEDICATED

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE TIMES,"

WITH THE SINCERE REGARD AND ESTEEM

OF THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THIS volume consists almost wholly of a series of articles on the campaign of 1870–1, written for "The Times," and published in that journal in the autumn of the past and the spring of the present year. Such a work, it is unnecessary to say, cannot be in any sense a history of the war, but it is hoped that these pages contain a tolerably exact and clear sketch of the main events of the great contest, and especially of its strategical combinations. The text has been carefully revised; several passages have been enlarged, abridged, transposed, or modified, in order either to connect the narrative, or to bring it into accord with the latest information, and a few paragraphs

and notes have been added. No important alterations have, however, been attempted; for, in the author's judgment, it would not be becoming to call a book a republication from "The Times" which did not in substance fulfil that character.

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THE CAMPAIGN OF 1870-1.

CHAPTER I.

THE great war of 1870–1 divides itself into two phases. The first act of the mighty drama comprises the series of memorable events which culminated in the disaster of Sedan—the stirring scenes which preceded the contest; the gatherings of the belligerent hosts on the frontier of Lorraine and the Rhineland; the sudden and irresistible attack of the Germans on their ill-guarded foes, and the decisive defeats which were the result; the operations, not more remarkable for feebleness and hesitation on the one side, than for ability and energy on the other, which led to the battles around Metz; and, finally, the astonishing movements which ended in the

complete destruction of the only remaining army of France in the field after her first reverses. The second act contains the advance of the Germans into the invaded country; the investment and wonderful siege of Paris; the patriotic, yet fruitless efforts of France to reverse the decree of fortune; the repeated attempts of her newly-raised levies to march to the relief of the capital; the struggles of the beleaguered city; the discomfiture, after a protracted conflict, of a national resistance, brave, indeed, but misdirected and ill-organized; and ultimately the cessation of the strife after the utter exhaustion of the powers of the vanquished. If we are still too near this gigantic contest to comprehend it in all its bearings; if, too, it is impossible as yet to forecast even its proximate results; we may endeavour to describe briefly the grand succession of military scenes which, beginning with the declaration of war, closed with the fall and capitulation of Paris, and to sketch the outline of a campaign unexampled, perhaps, even in this century; nor

can it be said that it is difficult to point the immediate moral of the great catastrophe. The war of 1870–1 is indeed pregnant with momentous lessons to rulers, soldiers, statesmen, and nations. In its first part it illustrates strikingly how, more decisively perhaps than at any other time, military genius and skill in these days exhibit their superiority in the field; how suddenly fatal may be the consequences of incapacity and rashness in command; and how feeble may be that power which rests mainly on memories and traditions, and not on its own inherent strength; and it shows conclusively how reckless and worthless in the hour of trial a government may become which has no solid or lasting foundations, is continually tempted from its position to make its supposed interests its paramount object, and is not subject to the wholesome control of vigilant but moderate public opinion. In its second phase the war proves how, even with the most favourable conditions, such an enterprise as the investment of Paris was fraught with danger to the German hosts;

how the unforeseen resistance of the capital, and the great strength of its fortifications enabled a nation which seemed prostrate to rise again in formidable power and to make victory appear doubtful; how military skill of the highest order, and military force on a colossal scale, were long taxed to the very utmost to overcome the obstacles they had underrated, and to assure the success once deemed certain; and how victory at last became the prize of ability in war and unflinching constancy prevailing over patriotic devotion. Nor less conspicuously does this phase of the campaign show how even generals of rare prescience may miscalculate the resources of a foe; how feebleness and incapacity fail to seize the favourable opportunity thus presented, or insensate rashness throws it away; how strategic genius can multiply the power of armies to an astonishing extent, and compass the most surprising ends; and how fearfully unequal a contest is between a well-organized force, under able leaders and confident in itself, and ill-trained

masses demoralized by defeat and for the most part weakly and badly commanded.

It is not our purpose to examine at length the causes of the war of 1870–71.* It had been ever threatening since the day of Sadowa placed Prussia at the head of the German commonwealth, united the North German Confederation, attracted Southern Germany to this league, and endangered the military supremacy of France by changing the map of Central Europe. Nor had signs of the coming rupture been wanting in the immense armaments of France and Prussia, in the reorganization of the French military system, in the affair of Luxemburg in 1867, in the irritable jealousy displayed by France with reference to the treaty of Prague, in the tone of the press of both nations, not obscurely hinting that acquisitions on the Rhine were to be

* Those who care to investigate this subject may consult the papers laid before Parliament, and the correspondence of the imperial family seized at the Tuileries by the Government of National Defence. On the German side, the letters of M. M., on the French, those of "Scrutator," respectively published in "The Times," may be read with profit. See also "Who is responsible for the war?" by this last writer; and the remarkable pamphlet of Baron Stoffel.

the prize of an impending struggle, of the feverish disquiet and suspense of the continent during the last four years. Yet, as often has happened, the immediate occasion of the conflict was an insignificant event, and history will record that the strife which arrayed the most warlike races of Europe in arms from the Niemen to the Atlantic originated in a point of honour. Although undoubtedly the neutral Powers * considered it in some degree a grievance, it may be questioned whether the prospect of a Hohenzollern prince on the throne of Spain ought to have given umbrage to France, or would have done so in different circumstances; and when her susceptibilities had been appeased, the importunate demands of M. Benedetti were vexatious and unwise in the extreme, even † admitting that the candidature of the prince had not been finally

* Lord Granville to Lord A. Loftus, 6th July, 1870. Lord Lyons to Lord Granville, 13th July, 1870. Lord Bloomfield to Lord Granville, 11th July, 1870.

† Memorandum of what occurred at Ems, drawn up with the approval of the King of Prussia.

Declaration of Government of France, 15th July, 1870. Lord Granville to Lord A. Loftus, 15th July, 1870.

withdrawn by Prussia, and that * her attitude towards her rival was not conciliatory or reassuring. The blame of beginning the tremendous contest must rest with the Emperor and his government, whatever may have been the provocation; and we see from his first military movements, and the incautious language of his docile senate, that the quarrel had been evidently premeditated by him. It is idle to say that France was not responsible for this act of a government to which only a few weeks before she had given proofs of unchanging confidence. Those who argue in this visionary way, forget the outburst of national passion which preceded the declaration of war and followed the preparations for it; and it appears certain † that the ill-fated Emperor believed sincerely that in the course he took he was carrying out the will of his subjects. In fact, though opposed

* Lord A. Loftus to Lord Granville, 13th July, 1870. Lord Bloomfield to Lord Granville, 11th July, 1870. Lord A. Loftus to Lord Granville, 6th July, 1870.

† See his proclamation to the Corps Legislatif, 21st July, 1870.

on high public grounds by a few honest men like M. Jules Favre, though deprecated on the score of expediency by politicians like M. Thiers, and though generally feared by the peasantry, the war was popular in the extreme with all classes which throughout the empire were suffered to embody public opinion; nor is it difficult to see the reason without imputing to France as a nation a peculiar desire * for foreign conquest, or even for mere military glory. A series of events had made France unquestionably the first power on the continent; and when this supremacy had been threatened by the issue of the campaign of 1866, and the State † which occupied her weakest frontier had suddenly acquired colossal strength, it is perfectly consistent with what we know of history that she should attempt to arrest the progress and curb

* It is the fashion to think of France as "the aggressor of Europe." The real student of history, versed in the annals of Spain, of Austria, of Russia, and of Prussia, at different periods, will probably agree with Burke, that "ambition is not local."

† This campaign illustrates La Vallée's remark, "La ou le Rhin nous quitte, le danger commence."

the power of her formidable rival. To comprehend the attitude of France, we should try to realize to our own minds what the national feeling of England would be were her ascendency at sea imperilled and her security even remotely menaced; and though Germany was not the first to draw the sword, she has not proved in her hour of triumph that Frenchmen were wrong in laying to her charge schemes of unscrupulous force and ambition.

After efforts at negotiation on the part of England, war was proclaimed on the 15th of July. The manner in which the summons to arms was generally received in France and Germany was characteristic of the two great races precipitated against each other in mortal encounter. The "light heart" of M. Ollivier, the cheers that shook the Legislative Assembly, the exultation that filled the streets of Paris, the crowds shouting the "*Marseillaise*" as the troops defiled on their way to the Rhine, the din, the clamour, the proud boasts that history would renew the day of

Jena, remind the reader of the peculiar qualities which since the age of Cæsar have distinguished the Gaul; while in the stern reticence, the fierce resolution, the self-contained strength of united Germany, we perceive the marks of that mighty people which crushed into dust the legions of Varus and defied the majesty of the Roman Empire. In a very few days it had become evident that French hopes founded on the disaffection of Hanover, on the dislike of Prussia existing at Frankfort, on the division between northern and southern Germany which had been the legacy of two centuries, were merely the dreams of an effete diplomacy; and no prospect appeared that a confederation of the Rhine would betray the gates of the Fatherland, or stoop to be the vassal of a Napoleon. Bavaria, Baden, and Würtemburg obeyed eagerly the call of Prussia; Saxony, throwing off the memories of 1866, prepared her contingent for the field; dissensions were hushed in the annexed provinces, and Germany, with one heart and mind, sprang to

arms to repel the foreign aggressor. Before a shot had been fired the French Emperor must have felt that he had made a mistake, that his calculation of finding allies or discontented subjects beyond the Rhine had turned out altogether false; and, indeed, probably his challenge in 1870 has done more to consolidate Germany than any event since the War of Independence. The die, however, had been cast; and France, which, at the outset, perhaps, had reckoned only on a struggle with Prussia, rushed wildly into the more serious contest with bold gallantry and easy confidence, though her more sagacious ruler appears to have viewed differently the impending issue. During all this time French troops in thousands had been marching rapidly towards the German frontier, and by the close of the third week in July a vast and formidable French army had taken its position along the arc which extends from Thionville, on the Lower Moselle, to Belfort, on the southern spurs of the Vosges. The first corps, under Marshal Mac-Mahon, formed for

the most part of Algerian regiments, had long before advanced from the south, and was concentrated in and around Strasburg. The fifth and second corps, under de Failly and Frossard, moved, the one from Tours and the other from Chalons, were stationed at Bitsche and St. Avold, almost on the verge of the Rhenish Provinces. The fourth corps, led by Ladmirault, from Lille, Arras, and the northern departments, held a nearly parallel line at Thionville; while behind, Bazaine, with the third corps, pushed forward from Besançon and Lyons, was encamped near the great fortress of Metz; the sixth, under the command of Canrobert, was being moved from Chalons to Nancy; the Imperial Guard was hastening from Paris; and, to the south-east, the seventh corps of Douay watched at Belfort, one of the weak points of France, and a possible avenue to Southern Germany. The French army, extended in front, with its reserves, narrowed on a shorter line, was thus spread out like a huge fan, and menaced Northern and Southern Germany

from the valley of the Moselle to the Black Forest.

Such was the disposition of the arrays of France, and the manner in which they had been collected and advanced gradually to the German frontier, in some instances before the end of June, makes it difficult to doubt that an attack on Prussia had been designed before the declaration of war. If a plan such as this was in perfect keeping with the unscrupulous policy of the First Empire, the military student will not fail to see that the arrangement of the French armies was not only calculated for an offensive movement, but was well devised to effect its object. The more advanced corps, near the Moselle and the Saar, in sufficiently close communication with each other, so long as a powerful foe was distant and resting on Metz and even on Strasburg, threatened the whole frontier of the Rhenish Provinces, while Baden also was placed in danger, and a large force was held in hand in the rear, which could be thrown rapidly on whatever line should be chosen

ultimately by the invader. The strategy of the French, therefore, pointed evidently to a speedy attack, and was adapted for that purpose; an advantageous position had been gained, and it was not to be expected that French commanders, trained in the traditions of the Grand Army, would trifle with a favourable opportunity. Besides, there was another consideration which cannot have escaped the French Emperor, and which made Europe expect that he would take a vigorous initiative from the first moment. The military force of France was a standing army, and this was so organised, that at the beginning of the war it was supposed to be superior in strength to anything that Germany could bring into the field, though in the long run it would be weaker in numbers, and though its mode of recruitment was slow, and it was feebly upheld by the national levies which, in imitation of the German system, had been recently arrayed to give it support. But Germany was an armed nation: if, at the outset, her standing army would be less

numerous than that of France, it would quickly assume immense proportions; and behind it were vast masses of reserves, composed of the martial flower of the race, which, experience had shown, would flock to the standards of the regular troops with astonishing speed, and which, if once collected, would form an array far exceeding the united musters of France. The hope of France lay, therefore, in the offensive, and if her strong first line made a daring attack, it might paralyze or break up the forces of Germany, might prevent her from concentrating her power, and might strike her defences down, and, perhaps, revive internal dissensions, reawakened by sudden and heavy disaster. On the other hand, if Germany were allowed to collect her gigantic military resources, and were given time to array them for war, the balance would incline against her foe; and the whole campaign of 1866 had shown that Prussia, even when alone, was in the highest degree formidable.

For these reasons it appears certain that an offensive campaign against Germany had been

designed by the French Emperor, and it was generally believed that the storm of war would gather densely over the Rhenish Provinces, at latest in the fourth week of July. And who can tell what the result would have been, had a general like the First Napoleon commanded the army which, in the pride of its strength, already grasped with its leading divisions the as yet unprotected German frontier? At this moment, it would appear, Germany was comparatively unprepared; the contingents of Baden and Würtemburg were only beginning to draw together; the Bavarian army was still distant; the main forces of the Northern Confederation were as yet behind the Weser and the Elbe; and it has been asserted on good authority that the great fortresses on the Rhine were feebly garrisoned, and that not more than three German corps—these, too, at wide distances from each other, from Dusseldorf to Trèves and Mayence, could have even approached the Rhenish Palatinate. An opportunity was here presented which a great commander would have turned to

account; and it is not improbable that if the First Napoleon had been in the field in such circumstances, he would have completely changed the character of the campaign, and by a sudden and well combined movement have taken possession of the Rhenish provinces, and, perhaps, advanced as far as Mayence. But feebleness and slowness occupied the place of genius and skill in the camp of France, and the occasion was lost on which, perhaps, the destiny of two nations depended. The French Emperor, who had delayed at Paris some time longer than he ought to have done—he had been probably engaged till the last moment in unsuccessful diplomatic schemes—did not reach his head-quarters at Metz until the 28th of July; and, even when he assumed the command of his army, he made a long irresolute pause of evil omen to his future operations. By this time Mac-Mahon's corps was advancing from Strasburg upon the Lauter; de Failly's and Frossard's were close to the Saar; the Imperial Guard had joined Bazaine at Metz,

while Ladmirault continued in his former position, and Canrobert had arrived at Nancy, and as yet there was nothing to prevent a bold march into the Rhenish Palatinate. But day after day was allowed to slip by, and except the absurd affair at Saarbrück, the whole French army remained inactive, nor were its divisions even united for the offensive movement that was still contemplated. It has been said that the cause of this was the discovery by the French Emperor that his corps was weaker than he had supposed, and that his commissariat was extremely defective, and that such was the fact we believe is certain. But in the actual position of affairs, when a rapid attack was still the true game, considerations of this kind would not have paralyzed a great commander; and in any case there can be no excuse for having left the French army as it was now placed, disseminated over a wide arc, and with its corps not sustaining each other, when, three weeks nearly after the declaration of war, the approach of the enemy might be expected.

While the Emperor had thus been delaying on the Saar, his enemy had acted after a different fashion. As soon as hostilities broke out, orders were given in all the German States to place the army on a war footing, and they were obeyed with more than patriotic devotion. It has been said that the remarkable men who direct the military fortunes of Prussia had misgivings lest the national organization might prove unequal to the sudden strain, and were apprehensive of the results of an attack; but, as each day passed, the wonderful spectacle of Germany rising into armed life, not with fitful passion, but in disciplined strength, must have caused anxiety to yield to confidence. From the stormy coasts of the Northern Sea to the valleys watered by the heads of the Danube, from the sunny hills of the land of the Rhine to the wastes and forests that edge the Niemen, the summons to meet the ancient foe was eagerly obeyed by the Teutonic race; and even in foreign lands and under distant skies, wherever the German

name extended, the call to the battle was equally welcome. In a very few days that marvellous system by which now, as in the days of Tacitus, the German people is marshalled for war,* "each tribe and family according to its place, and not in an aggregate of mere armed men," was in full operation throughout its territories; and under the influence of fervid zeal, of well-tried discipline, and of skilful arrangement, the national hosts became truly formidable. From the recruiting grounds allotted to it each battalion speedily called in its reserves, and expanded into its full strength; the regiments so formed were at once arrayed into divisions and corps, under proved commanders, and furnished with every appliance of war; behind, to augment the regular troops, and again, following local distinctions, the Landwehr stood in second and third line; and these gigantic masses, perfectly equipped and in the highest sense a national army, were sent westward with the celerity

* See also "Cæsar de Bello Gallico," cap. 51. "Germani suas copias castris eduxerunt generatimque constituerunt."

which belongs only to modern locomotion. Eye-witnesses have told how, day after day, from the second week to the end of July, the railway lines of Germany bore the mighty host in endless succession; how mass after mass, of armed men, attended with all the material of war, rolled rapidly, yet in order, forward to the points selected for the different gatherings; while, in the meantime, the work of preparation went on busily in the Rhine fortresses, and with strong garrisons, repaired works, ditches filled, and ramparts crowned with their guns, they were made ready to defy the invader. By the first days of August three great armies had taken possession of the strip of territory which between the lower course of the Moselle and the Rhine has for centuries been a battlefield between the Gaulish and the Teutonic races. The first army, composed of the 7th, 8th, and part of the 10th corps, and under the command of the veteran Steinmetz, had been moved from the north down the valley of the Moselle, and probably along the railway from Bingen; and

it now approached the line of the Saar, with its rearward divisions at no great distance. The second army, led by Prince Frederick Charles, but under the nominal command of the king, had crossed the Rhine at Mannheim and Mayence, and was not nearly so advanced as the first; but its front had united with the left of Steinmetz, and it occupied in force the central region between the Hochwald and the northern Vosges, the principal avenue to the heart of the Rhineland. This army, though not yet collected, was to comprise not less than seven corps—the Guards, the 1st, the 2nd, the 3rd, the 4th, the 9th, and the Saxon 12th. It formed the centre of the great German masses; and even now it was in a condition to co-operate in a movement upon the Saar, while stretching from Landstühl to Kaiserlautern, and thence with its left to Neustadt and Spire, and with its rearward supports backwards, it was alike ready for attack or defence. Meanwhile, under the Crown Prince of Prussia, the third army had crossed the Rhine; it consisted of three

Prussian corps—the 5th and the 11th, with the 6th in the rear, and of two considerable Bavarian corps, with the Baden and Würtemberg contingents; and, resting on Landau and Germersheim, and with its right touching the second army, its outposts reached the stream of the Lauter, where the lines of Villars ought to have warned the French that there was a weak point on the frontier of Alsace.

The eight corps of the French army are described as numbering at the outbreak of the war not less than 350,000 men, with guns and horses in due proportion. It is certain, however, that an immense deduction must be made from this imposing force; and terrible rumours have been afloat as to the manner in which official corruption and peculation of the vilest kind sent regiments and battalions into the field at two-thirds only of their supposed strength. We think it probable that the above eight corps were never 300,000 strong,*

* Recent disclosures would show that even this estimate is too high.

and, as six only were within the scope of operations near the Rhenish provinces, nearly the whole of the corps of Douay and Canrobert being still at a considerable distance, we doubt if 220,000 Frenchmen were ever marshalled upon the theatre between Thionville, Metz, and Strasburg. But by the 2nd and 3rd of August not less, certainly, than 200,000 Germans were almost in line upon the frontier behind the streams of the Saar and the Lauter; while, in the rear, at least 200,000 more were advancing along the principal roads which run into France from the Rhenish provinces, and were in communication with their leading divisions. The delay which had allowed Germany to arm and pour into the Rhineland had thus caused the French army to be outnumbered nearly two to one on the line chosen by its own commanders; and, literally before a blow had been struck, its chances of success had well nigh vanished. A mere calculation of numbers, however, will not convey an adequate notion of the danger in which it was now placed, and of the dif-

ference between the energy and skill displayed conspicuously by the German leaders, and the false strategy of the French commanders. A glance at the map will show that the corps which, from Thionville to the north of Strasburg, formed the advanced line of the French army, were not only scattered on a wide front and feebly connected if at all, but were thrown too far beyond their supports at Metz, and were thus liable to be isolated, and beaten in detail by a daring enemy. This was especially the case with the corps of Frossard, de Failly, and Mac-Mahon, which, separated from each other and from the bodies in the rear, were in a position somewhat similar to that of the French before the First Napoleon succeeded in the operations of Landshut and Ratisbon. On the other hand, the corps of the Germans collected upon a narrow front from within Saarlouis to Weissenburg, with their supports close at hand from Neuenkirchen, to Homburg, Kaiserlautern, Neustadt, and Landau, and, holding three railways and numerous roads, were already in a position to throw a

preponderating force on the French line at almost any point of attack; and, having driven it in, to roll into France an overwhelming tide of destructive invasion. In fact, as regards the French front, they were in possession of the chord of the arc, from Thionville to Bitsche and Strasburg, with easier means of concentration, and they had the power of seconding a vigorous advance by an offensive movement of crushing strength. The combinations which produced these results reflect the highest credit on the German commanders and on the martial arrays they led; they show skill, forethought, energy, and boldness; and they were conducted with that secrecy and swiftness invaluable in military operations. Already before it had burst in ruin, the cloud of war which overhung the Saar threatened the forces of France with serious disaster.

CHAPTER II.

THE German commanders were not slow to avail themselves of the advantages they had gained, and to assail the divided front of their enemy. On the 2nd of August a French detachment from Frossard's corps had ascended the heights which overlook the town of Saarbrück, and had dislodged an inferior Prussian force; but, as it made no attempt to proceed further, there is reason to believe that what was supposed to have been the beginning of an offensive movement, to seize the important point of Neuenkirchen, and to sever the communication between the railway lines which here converge from the east and west, was merely a demonstration to occupy the troops, and to show the Prince Imperial a

mimicry of war. Next day all was quiet along the French line; its divisions remained in their former positions; and though the country between Saarbrück and Saarlouis is said to have been reconnoitred in part, not a single French general seems to have conceived that the heads of the columns of three hostile armies were but a few miles off on the opposite frontier. These idle dreams of thoughtless confidence were rudely dissipated on the 4th of August. On the morning of that day the Crown Prince of Prussia, who had been gradually augmenting the force he had advanced near the banks of the Lauter, crossed the stream, and fell on a French division which, detached from the corps of Mac-Mahon, and thrown negligently far beyond its supports, was encamped near the old town of Weissenburg. The Prince, like a judicious commander, had taken care to assure success, and to make it certain that the first blow he struck—a matter of vital importance in war—should be irresistible and completely decisive. Having detached a Baden division

to his left, he led three divisions against the French in front; and moving rapidly, fell with a crushing shock on his astonished and unsuspecting enemy. He had probably about 40,000 men against 10,000 or 12,000; and the result was what might have been expected when a force, certainly more than three to one, attacks suddenly an unprepared antagonist. The French, scattered negligently in their camp, and, it is said, taking their morning meal, were completely surprised as the Prussian skirmishers emerged from the woods in which they had hidden; and though they offered a gallant resistance, and a stand was made for a time in houses and enclosures in the neighbourhood of Weissenburg, they were soon overpowered by superior numbers. When the Geisberg had been stormed by the Prussians the whole French line gave way in confusion; and its routed fragments having lost their commander—the brother of the chief of the 7th Corps—fell back precipitately, leaving in their flight a gun and about 500 prisoners.

The affair of Weissenburg was only a com-

bat, not necessarily attended with important consequences, but useful to the victors as giving their arms that credit and presumption of success so valuable at the outset of a campaign. The Crown Prince devoted the 5th of August to collecting his troops in advance of Weissenburg, and before nightfall he had concentrated an army of not less than 120,000 men, which threatened the great road from the frontier to Strasburg, while his Baden division stood menacingly on the parallel line which runs from Lauterburg. He had suffered a good deal the day before; many stragglers encumbered the march of his columns, and* if de Failly with the French 5th Corps, combining with a French force in front, had attacked from Bitsche the Germans in flank, as they threw their right wing forward, it is not impossible that a check might have been inflicted on the Prussian commander. Nothing, however, of the kind was attempted; and while de Failly sent one

* Since the above was written, confirmation has been afforded of this criticism.

division, which could be of little avail, across the hills, he remained immovable with his main force, misinterpreting, it is said, his orders, while the German army was being concentrated. Meantime Mac-Mahon, who, with the 1st Corps, increased by unimportant reinforcements, had been stationed beyond Hagenau, prepared for a march upon the Lauter, on hearing of the defeat of Weissenburg, drew together without delay his troops, and stood in readiness to accept battle. The report that this brave but unfortunate chief advanced recklessly to attack the Crown Prince, and courted defeat, is evidently false, and the dispositions of the French marshal appear to have been well conceived and executed. He sought out and occupied a strong position, from which he threatened the Germans in flank should they advance on the main road to Strasburg—and he compelled them, therefore, to turn against him—yet at which he could draw supports from de Failly should that general come to his aid, and, unless in the event of an utter rout,

he could fairly cover his own line of retreat. He posted his army on a range of eminences, in places rising into rocky bluffs, in part fronted by the stream of the Sauer, and with hamlets and difficult ground on their slopes, which may be said to extend from Reichshofen, by Fröschweiller, to beyond Elsasshausen. The French left rested on Reichshofen, protected by the town and the heights; its centre was prolonged beyond Fröschweiller and held the rising lands between that place and Woerth; and its right stretched far outside Elsasshausen, flanked by a village and a hill which seems to have been exceedingly rough and precipitous. Here, holding the table lands behind the crest of the range, his front strong and his flanks well guarded, and in a position in which an attack was beset by impediments of all kinds—enclosures, villages, vineyards, and streams—Mac-Mahon steadily awaited his enemy, and it seems to be admitted that he had done the best which could be expected from an able commander. He had, perhaps, 49,000 men, composed of his

own corps, of which one division had been seriously reduced at Weissenburg, of one division from the 7th Corps of Douay, and of a cuirassier brigade from the 6th Corps, and he drew up his army in two lines, with his cavalry as a separate reserve.

The Crown Prince had in hand an immense force to assail his enemy in his strong position. He had concentrated two Bavarian, and the 5th and 11th Prussian Corps, with a large division of Würtembergers, and he moved with more than 120,000 men, and probably nearly four hundred guns, to strike decisively the French marshal. Being compelled to turn some way to the right, and to change their front from the road to Strasburg, the German masses were somewhat disunited, and not well closed up on the morning of the 6th; and while their centre and right had approached the French, many of their divisions were still in the distance. The battle commenced about two hours after daybreak, by skirmishing on the German right and centre, which having been vigorously answered by

the French, the 5th Prussian Corps brought its guns forward to protect the position it held at Woerth. As yet the German commanders waited the advance of their masses to attack; and a forward movement by a Bavarian corps, which had made some impression on the French left, was countermanded about ten o'clock. The withdrawal, however, of this body, left the 5th Prussian Corps somewhat exposed; and Mac-Mahon, seizing the opportunity, threw his front line forward, and endeavoured to crush this isolated part of his antagonist's forces. A sanguinary engagement raged for nearly two hours about Woerth, each side fighting with the most stubborn valour; but the arrival of the 11th Prussian Corps compelled the French, who were being outflanked, to fall back slowly on their own centre. It was now the turn of the Germans to advance; and the two Prussian corps assailed the heights near Frösch-weiller with heroic gallantry, while a Bavarian corps engaged the French left, which for some time had been but little occupied. The

attack and the defence were equally obstinate; the Germans, as they rushed up the difficult slopes, were repeatedly driven back with heavy loss; and the tide of battle swayed long doubtfully, the French, though greatly inferior in numbers, having immense advantages in their position. At two, however, the whole forces of the Germans had come into line, and the Crown Prince determined to make a decisive effort against his enemy. While he still engaged Mac-Mahon in front, he moved a Bavarian corps to turn the extreme French right, and he pushed forward the other Bavarian corps and the Würtembergers on Reichshofen, to turn the left of the French and their best line of retreat. The French struck heavily at the German centre, as it was thinned for a time by these movements; but though they displayed "consummate bravery,"* they were ultimately driven back, and repulsed on Fröschweiller. Meanwhile, the attack of the Germans on their wings developed itself in formidable strength;

* German semi-official account.

and dense columns stretched far beyond Elsasshausen, while miles away the heights of Reichshofen were overlapped by a line of fire. As the storm burst on the French right, Mac-Mahon drew in his wing on his centre—a movement executed under a heavy fire, which obtained the praise of his brave foes—and endeavoured to make a stand for a time; but the pressure soon became overwhelming, and assailed fiercely in front and flank, the French right and centre were cut in two, and rolled away in shattered and divided fragments from the heights long and nobly defended. About the same time the whole French left was outflanked, driven in, and crushed, and before six in the evening, the magnificent army which had crowned the range before Woerth at sunrise, was a ruined mass of disheartened fugitives, rushing helplessly along the divergent roads which lead to Niederbronn, Saverne, and Strasburg. The retreat, though covered by a division from de Failly's Corps, which had come up from Bitsche, too late to take part in the shock of

battle, was a disastrous and precipitate rout. Had the Germans made good use of their cavalry, not a regiment could have held together; and as it was, more than 20,000 men were killed, wounded, or taken prisoners; thirty guns and six mitrailleuses were captured; and for several days Mac-Mahon's force, in a military point of view, was reduced to nothingness. The plan of the campaign and the treasure of the 1st Corps fell into the hands of the victors; and, significant of the oriental luxury which was too prevalent in the French army, among other trophies, was a gaudy collection of ladies' dresses and female finery.

This terrible and well-contested battle was honourable alike to conquerors and conquered. The Germans certainly were in irresistible force; but this was not felt until after midday, and for several hours the French possessed the advantage of a formidable position. When the German attack was fully developed, it proved, as might have been expected, crushing; yet for some time

the Germans fought with a superiority of numbers not too great to render the struggle wholly unequal. On the other hand, the French displayed the characteristic valour of their race; they attacked frequently with splendid courage, and resisted with determined resolution; and they evidently manœuvred with the ease, the celerity, and the precision of a well-trained army. Yet, as often has happened, they showed signs of panic towards the close of the fight; they broke up rapidly on being outflanked, and fled from the field in wild confusion; and though too much stress is not to be laid on this, we may be allowed to believe that British troops would have been more patient and sternly tenacious. As regards the tactics of the commanders opposed, the movements of the Germans at the beginning of the day seemed certainly not to have been well timed; their attacks were partial and disunited, and Mac-Mahon was given more than one chance, especially against the centre at Woerth, which, had de Failly's corps been added to his own, might

have caused the result to be very different. It is acknowledged, too, by the Germans themselves, that their cavalry ought to have done more. Had that arm been boldly and vigorously employed after the French flanks had been finally turned, Mac-Mahon's army might have been destroyed; it is at least probable that it would have been more cut up, and that it would have lost nearly its whole artillery. The manner, however, in which the Crown Prince disposed his forces for the double attack on both the French flanks seems to have been admirable, if not altogether free from danger; and though it may be said that on this day he acted cautiously, with some hesitation, and perhaps without the hope of great success, he nevertheless gave proof of the powers of a real general at the decisive moment. Mac-Mahon's conduct in the first part of the day was worthy of his high reputation; he made the most of his troops and his ground, and handled his army with quickness and skill; but probably he ought to have effected his retreat while as yet an

opportunity remained, when the great flanking attacks were being developed. He seems not to have tried to make an impression on the Prussian columns by the free use of the as yet unknown and dreaded mitrailleuse; but perhaps the wooded and broken character of the slopes impeded the play of this weapon, and it can be hardly supposed that he would have missed the occasion had it been fairly offered. One great mistake was certainly made by the French towards the close of the day. The cuirassier brigade of the 6th Corps was ordered to charge the advancing Prussians on ground wholly unfit for cavalry, and this fine reserve, which should have covered the retreat, was sacrificed and almost annihilated.

While this desperate contest was being waged on the extreme right of the French line, another battle of a different kind was being fought near its divided centre. On the 5th of August the 2nd French corps began to evacuate the heights of Saarbrück, which it had idly occupied three days before,

and by nightfall it lay extended along the valley leading from that place to Forbach. In the morning of the sixth its outposts were driven in and surprised by a single German division, the vanguard of the 7th corps of Steinmetz, which, with considerable supports in its rear, had crossed the Saar and passed through Saarbrück. The accounts of the engagement which followed are in the highest degree perplexing, and we can only hope that the main outlines of our narrative are sufficiently correct. Perceiving the weakness of the enemy in their front, the French, whose force, it is said, was augmented by a division from the 3rd Corps of Bazaine, advanced up the valley again towards Saarbrück, and took possession of a range of heights, with woods on their right, from which they awaited the approach of their foe with easy confidence. Here they were assailed with wonderful daring by the Germans, who, though greatly outnumbered, contrived for some hours to harass the French and keep them at bay, and even by threatening their left flank

prevented them from coming down the slope, and closing in force upon their enemy. This bold attitude gave time to another division from the corps of Steinmetz to hasten forward to the scene of action; and this before long was reinforced by a third division from the army of Prince Frederick Charles hurried by railway from Neuenkirchen, and moved rapidly on hearing the roar of the cannon. The contest now became more equal, though the odds were still in favour of the French; and the Germans deploying, smote the French right with a continual fire of skirmishers from the woods, while they assailed in front the steep range of heights which formed the key of the French position. The contest was sanguinary and fierce; the Germans repeatedly advanced to the charge, and were beaten back with considerable loss; but at last the French right gave way, mutilated by the murderous discharges from the woods, and the German battalions crowned the blood-stained heights, having stormed them with astonishing courage. The French, after

this notable exploit, collected their forces for a last effort, but their attacks spent themselves on the German line "like waves dashing and breaking against a rock;" and before long a new foe appeared, which compelled them hastily to retrace their footsteps. A fourth German division from the corps of Steinmetz, moved from Saarbrück, appeared on their left; and, as soon as its columns reached the field, the whole French army, as if smitten by a shock, broke up and fled in headlong route, leaving baggage, guns, and caissons behind, and losing its best line of retreat by Forbach. In the unexaggerated language of the victors, "the corps being entirely demoralized, dispersed; the road it took in its hasty flight was marked by numerous waggons with provisions and clothing; the woods were filled with hosts of stragglers wandering about in a purposeless way, and large stores and quantities of goods fell into our hands."

This victory was glorious to the German troops, who, during a considerable part of

the day, contended against overwhelming numbers, and drove their enemy from a very strong position. Though the French fought for a time gallantly, they certainly were very badly handled; and towards the end of the struggle they lost all confidence, and retreated in a discreditable manner. It is not improbable that the advance of the first German division was premature; but the dispositions of the German commanders, when once the battle was engaged, were able; their reinforcements were quickly brought into the field; they seem to have chosen the right points of attack; and eye-witnesses have recorded with what admirable skill they made use of the cover of the woods to harass and ruin the French right. On the other hand, the tactics of the French appear to have been as bad as possible; they were not only surprised in the morning, but they ought easily to have crushed the first German division; they attacked in force when it was too late; and their whole arrangements may warrant a belief in the well nigh incredible

rumour that General Frossard was miles away from his troops during a great part of the day. The results of the two engagements of the 6th, named by the victors those of Woerth and Forbach, revealed fully the fatal errors of strategy committed by the French Commander-in-Chief, and placed the whole French army in a most critical position. The weak and extended French front had been broken through by two fearful blows, and driven in headlong on its supports, which might be involved in its disaster; and even now it had become doubtful whether its dissevered and shattered fragments would be able to reunite, and oppose their combined force to the triumphant enemy. The right wing under Mac-Mahon was scattered in eccentric retreat behind the Vosges, a broken and disorganized mass; de Failly's corps, which lay between the armies routed at Woerth and Forbach, was exposed to be cut off and destroyed; and the French left and centre, separated into parts, divided by long intervals between, and with the corps of

Frossard well nigh ruined, was in no condition to resist with success the mighty flood of German invasion which, wave after wave, now rolled onwards across the Saar and through the Vosges passes. How the French army, baffled and weakened, compelled to fall back on far lines of retreat, or already dangerously disunited, would be able to concentrate in the presence of the immense forces which would at once be poured into Alsace and Lorraine, and would hold the shortest routes into the latter province, was the arduous problem which now awaited solution on the part of the imperial commanders.

CHAPTER III.

How difficult that problem was becoming will be evident from a consideration of the positions being taken by the contending hosts. After the terrible defeat it had suffered at Woerth, Mac-Mahon's army had been dispersed, and a large part of his broken right wing had escaped towards Hagenau and Strasburg, while the remains of his troops had scattered over the roads that run southwards athwart the Vosges. The marshal seems to have made an effort to reach de Failly's corps and Bitsche, in order to rejoin the main army, and had attempted a stand at Niederbronn; but his troops gave way at the sight of the Germans, and he fell back hastily upon Saverne, where, rallying his stragglers as well

as he could, he marched rapidly, and in sore distress, westward. Meantime, the remaining French corps endeavoured to effect their junction in Lorraine, swayed hither and thither by the pressure of the foe, and compelled to make more than one false movement in consequence of the distance between their first line on the Saar and their second at Metz. De Failly, all but cut off at Bitsche, was unable to reach the principal force, and was obliged to make the best of his way southward, in the hope of rejoining Mac-Mahon, too fortunate if he could save the 5th Corps from the dangers that gathered thickly around it. Frossard, after the rout of Forbach, had fled with the wrecks of his corps towards Metz, abandoning St. Avold, and several good positions; and Ladmirault, who though as yet unassailed, was involved in the common disaster, evacuated Thionville with the 4th Corps, and was in retreat towards Metz along the Moselle. Bazaine, meanwhile, with the 3rd Corps, had been directed to advance from Metz, in order to rally the forces in his front,

and had taken a position upon the Nied,—a step which, perhaps, could not have been avoided, but which obviously threw a considerable portion of the French army dangerously forward, and exposed it to more than one mischance. At the same time, while the Imperial Guard had remained in its camp, about Metz, a part of the 6th Corps of Canrobert had been moved towards the great fortress, while the remainder continued at its post at Nancy. As for the 7th Corps, that of Douay, it had been left in the place it had held, and, except the division which had fought at Woerth, it was still distant from the theatre of operations.

Such was the position of the French army about three days after Woerth and Forbach. Mac-Mahon with its broken right wing, towards which de Failly was now inclining, was completely cut off from the main body; and its left and centre, hardly united, were gathering in front of, and at Metz, were yet exposed to be defeated in detail, and, in part, advanced on a line on which it was liable, if

beaten, to serious disaster. This force, too, the principal hope of France, composed only of three intact corps, of the routed 2nd, and of part of the 6th, numbering, perhaps, 160,000 men, with between four hundred and five hundred guns, was well known to be wholly unequal to the immense masses being moved against it, and already victorious within the frontier. What if, separated from its supports, it should be assailed in Lorraine, and either defeated or hemmed in if it made a stand against the surging tide of German invasion, while the conquerors of Woerth caught and overwhelmed the shattered and distant corps of Mac-Mahon? Already this prospect seemed impending, for nearly 200,000 men from the armies of Steinmetz and Prince Frederic Charles were on their way from the Saar to the Nied, while to the left the Crown Prince, in communication with them, was sweeping through the passes of the Vosges and along the highways that lead into Champagne. In these circumstances, we cannot be surprised that the Emperor, having fortunately suc-

ceeded in rallying a respectable force on the Nied, should have fallen back without delay on Metz, and have drawn under the protection of the fortress the whole remains of his left and centre; and well it would have been if, this having been done, he had continued this retrograde movement. At this crisis, however, the vacillation and tardiness which marked the imperial strategy reappears with ill-omened distinctness, and the danger which had been averted for the moment was to be renewed and become imminent. The whole French army, except, of course, the corps of Mac-Mahon, de Failly, and Douay, was concentrated under the guns of Metz on the 10th or the 11th of August; and it cannot be doubted that, having thrown a sufficient garrison into the place, it ought, without the delay of an instant, to have fallen back by Verdun on Châlons, at which place only it could hope to effect a junction with its defeated right, and where, possibly, if well led, it might defend the lines of the Marne and the Seine, and repeat the scenes of 1814. Three

precious days were instead wasted; the Emperor lingered irresolutely at Metz, employed, it is said, in reviewing his troops, in councils of war, and in planning the campaign; and, as late as the morning of the 14th, his army was in the positions it held, an order having then been only just given for a general movement across the Moselle. Whether Napoleon III. or Marshal Bazaine, who, it is said, had been made commander-in-chief,* is responsible for this delay, is unknown; enough to say, that it was fraught with ruin, and pregnant with calamity to France. While the imperial generals paused inactive, the huge German masses had swept forward rapidly; and while the Crown Prince on their left continued his march, their centre and right were closing on Metz, and encircling it with irresistible forces. By the 13th the columns of Steinmetz had advanced to the northern verge of the fortress; a large part of the second army was within a few

* Marshal Bazaine, in the pamphlet he has published, declares that he was not made commander-in-chief until the 13th of August.

miles upon the east, while the remainder, under Prince Frederic Charles, had crossed the Moselle at Pont-à-Mousson, and moving northwards, was already in a position to threaten the line of the French retreat, and even to reach the flanks of the French army, should it seek to march by Verdun on Châlons. Not far from 230,000 men, with, probably, nearly eight hundred guns, had filled the country round the stronghold of Lorraine; and the much weaker force which had become bound to it was encompassed by dangers on every side.

By these operations the main French army was already either being hemmed in at Metz, and menaced in its retreat on Châlons, or, if it moved from Metz, it would be before long exposed to a flank attack of a formidable kind, combined, probably, with an attack in the rear by an enemy of very superior numbers. The military student will not fail to contrast the irresolute weakness of the commanders who had placed themselves in this critical position with the boldness and energy of the

German chiefs, who, by their rapid and well-concerted movements, had rendered success almost certain. The consequences, as might be expected, were not slow in unfolding themselves. On the 14th of August the vanguard of the French began crossing the Moselle, on the road to Verdun, and it is evident that its leaders had no notion that already a German force was on its way to intercept its retreat. The Emperor was with this body which effected safely the passage of the river, and evacuated Metz without loss, but certainly halted at no great distance, although the Emperor himself, on the next day, moved off and ultimately reached Châlons, having thus significantly given up a command which, for the sake of France, he ought not to have assumed. The mass of the French army, however, did not attain the Moselle on the 14th; three of its corps, those of Ladmirault, of Frossard, and the 3rd now commanded by General Decaen in the stead of Bazaine, continued in camp towards the east of Metz, and they seem not to have began their march until some time in

the afternoon. They were assailed by the 7th Corps of Steinmetz, and by a corps of the 2nd Army, the German commanders being aware of the importance of "nailing them," as they said, "to the spot," until the flanking movement beyond the Moselle had been developed with sufficient completeness. The French, who held several little villages, and had entrenched themselves at points in their front, fought bravely, and disputed the ground obstinately; the fire of the chassepot, which in previous encounters had been comparatively wild and irregular, being, it was remarked, especially deadly from the rifle-pits in which they lay concealed by thousands. The Germans, however, gradually advanced, and the excellence of their fire* may be inferred from the fact that, in one of the rifle-pits carried by them, they found not less than 781 Frenchmen killed by the needle-gun in spite of this ambush. After a bloody contest of three or

* Baron Stoffel in his remarkable report predicted, as the event showed, that the fire of the German infantry would be more accurate than that of the French.

four hours, in which the assailants suffered severely, having been drawn under the guns of Metz, and struck in flank by a well-directed attack, the French retreated towards evening, and sought shelter, it is said, "within the glacis of the fortress." However this may have been, the main object of their adversaries had been gained; the principal mass of the French army had been detained in its former positions; and every hour was bringing an increasing force to close on its line of retreat outwards.

The operations of the next day are still involved in a good deal of obscurity. The German generals pressed forward the march of their columns towards the road to Verdun, and drew round on either side of Metz; but it is evident from the despatches of the King that complete success was thought still doubtful, and the escape of the French not yet impossible. Meantime Bazaine, who, thenceforward, must be held accountable for what happened, had defiled with the bulk of his army through Metz, had crossed to the left

bank of the Moselle, had sent forward a part of the baggage and other impediments of his troops, and, rejoining his vanguard, had, by the evening, advanced his outposts to Mars-la-Tour and Doncourt, on the two lines of road which lead respectively to Verdun and Etain, his main force stretching towards Metz backward. It is difficult in the state of our knowledge to censure a general who assumed the command at a critical juncture for not having pushed more forward;* but certainly, as time was everything to the French, and Bazaine ought to have known or suspected that the Germans were converging towards him, and making for his only line of retreat, a march of from twelve to fifteen miles fell short of what he ought to have accomplished; and here again we perceive traces of the want of decision and ready promptness which throughout characterized the French move-

* Marshal Bazaine in his pamphlet attributes the slowness of his movements on the 14th and the 15th to a deficiency of bridges upon the Moselle, which he says retarded this march of his columns. This may be true; but we must observe second-rate commanders are in the habit of making excuses of this kind.

ments. It does not appear that on the 15th Bazaine was seriously harassed by his foe; the road to Verdun was still open, at least to an army of the strength of his; the German generals, as we have seen, feared that he might be in time to retreat; and it is probable that if he had advanced with more celerity on that momentous day, and had massed his divisions closely, he might have succeeded in breaking through the toils which his vigilant antagonists were winding round him. It seems, however, that he was not fully aware of the peril which was becoming imminent; for on the night of the 15th, or the next morning, he despatched a message that he would be "with all his army at Etain on the 16th"—that is, beyond the reach of his enemy; and he may, perhaps, have moved with comparative slowness to avoid the appearance of a forced retreat, and to save the loss of numerous stragglers. We may reject the malevolent reports that he delayed in order to give time to the Emperor to escape to Châlons, or that he did not choose to

make a difficult movement on the festal day of the First Napoleon.

Next day the movement of the French was too late; the skilful designs of the German generals became revealed with fatal distinctness. The army of Bazaine had commenced its march on the two roads to Verdun and Etain, its columns extending in long lines, when it was suddenly attacked on the Verdun road by the cavalry of the 3rd Prussian Corps, part of the forces of Prince Frederic Charles, which had arrived on the left flank of the French, having accomplished the distance from Pont-à-Mousson. It is plain from the German despatches that a large body of infantry ought to have been up, but the horsemen, with that stubborn daring which has characterized the operations of the Germans whenever a great stake was to be won, fell on the enemy with brilliant courage, and endeavoured to stop him until their supports should come up, and render the fight more equal. The leading column of the French chanced to be a part of the routed

corps of Frossard, and, demoralized by the effects of its recent defeat, and panic-stricken by the German onslaught, it fell into confusion as it attempted to deploy, and made only a feeble resistance. The cavalry, striking it fiercely in flank, threw it in a short time in complete disorder, and this communicated itself to the next column, which, as it advanced to the aid of the one in front, was also unable to clear the road, and fell back baffled and disconcerted. By this time the infantry of the 3rd Corps had reached the scene, and the assailants, fastening on their foes as they advanced, contrived successfully to bar the passage, and inflicted considerable losses on them. By degrees three of the French corps, with a part of the Imperial Guard, became engaged on the Verdun road; and portions of the 8th and 9th Corps under Prince Frederic Charles having come up, the battle raged along the whole line from Mars la Tour to Rezonville. The French, though largely superior in numbers, fought at a great disadvantage, the attack being ever on their flank; but it

seems that they might have burst through, had it not been for a magnificent charge of the cavalry of the 10th German Corps, which headed them on the Verdun road, and drove them back after an obstinate struggle. This brilliant exploit, worthy of the best deeds of Seidlitz and Murat, was decisive; the whole French line gave up the attempt to cut its way through, and fell back towards Metz, and, though the charge which had done so much had cost the lives of hundreds of brave men, the loss was as nothing to the advantage. Meanwhile, the remainder of the French army had been assailed on the Etain road by a part of the 7th Corps of Steinmetz, which had been moved forward for this purpose, and after a series of bloody combats, this, too, was compelled to fall back from Doncourt, and retire by Gravelotte on Metz.

Such were the battles of the 16th, which Marshal Bazaine claimed as a victory. It is possible that he inflicted more loss on the Germans than he actually sustained, though the capture of two eagles, of seven guns, and

of nearly 2,000 French prisoners, does not bear the appearance of success. But, measured by their strategic results, the operations of the day were disastrous to him; and, though he did not yet see the whole truth, it must have been with a heavy heart that he witnessed the recoil of his army backward. The retreat of the French had been frustrated; they had been forced from their forward positions at Vionville and Doncourt, on the Verdun and Etain roads, and compelled to incline towards Metz; and the Germans, closing on their flanks and front, were already upon the principal lines by which they could make good their way to Châlons. What if the enemy, whose united strength was largely superior to their own, should plant himself firmly on these avenues, should oppose an invincible barrier to them, and hemming them in upon Metz, should completely sever their communications, and lock them up imprisoned in the fortress? The marshal, however, like a stout soldier, endeavoured to make the best of the situation; and having

managed to persuade his lieutenants that they had been victorious on the 16th, and that the army had only fallen back,* "in order to obtain ammunition," he addressed himself to extricate his men from their critical and dangerous position, though his operations, in our own judgment, were not marked by conspicuous talent. He had four corps and a part of a fifth, perhaps 140,000 men under arms, allowances being made for sick and losses; and his first care was to choose a strong position, where he could offer a firm resistance, and could retain his hold on his lines of retreat, and whence, if victorious, he could break forth and make good his intended movement to Châlons. Such a position was found in the range of uplands which, intersected at points by ravines, with brooks and difficult ground in front, and with belts of wood in the near distance, extends from the village of Gravelotte to the north-east to

* The marshal's pamphlet ascribes his retreat of the 16th to this cause. He seems now to be fully aware of the disastrous consequences.

Privat La Montaigne, beyond the road that runs from Metz to the frontier. The 17th of August was spent by Bazaine in stationing his troops along this line, and in collecting every means of defence which could increase its natural strength; and the arrangements of the marshal certainly gave proof of the tactical skill for which he is renowned. The French left, occupying Gravelotte, at the junction of the roads from Verdun and Etain, and thence prolonged by the high road to Metz, held a range of heights, with a wood beneath, which commanded all the neighbouring approaches; and protected in front by lines of intrenchments, with rifle pits and a formidable artillery, and resting on the fort of St. Quentin in the rear, it might be considered well-nigh impregnable. The French centre, though not so strong, had also the advantage of rising ground, with numerous obstacles along the front; it likewise had been fully intrenched; and to the right, until St. Privat was reached, defended by rivulets, gullies, and thickets, the French line crossed

the road to Sedan, and ran along slopes terminating at Roncourt and Jaumont. Bazaine posted about 120,000 men along this formidable defensive line, clinging to Gravelotte with his best troops, and leaving about 20,000 as a reserve near Metz.

These dispositions of the French commander, viewed simply as a scheme of defence, were marked by ability and skill; but—besides that the whole conduct of Bazaine at this conjuncture reveals a want of strategic talent of a high order—the result was to illustrate the truth of the saying of the First Napoleon, that a defensive position is always defective if it does not afford facilities for offence, since it enables your enemy at his leisure to search and find the weak points in your armour. The French could only resist passively along the whole extent of their front; they had no means of attacking in return, and ranges of woods beyond their reach, which stretched before a great part of their centre and right, gave a daring adversary a vantage ground to turn their position at the weakest end. While

Bazaine had been making these preparations, the German commanders disposed their forces for an attack which, if in some measure hazardous, promised, if successful, to have immense consequences. By the 17th the entire force from Pont-à-Mousson had come into line, and, in communication with that of Steinmetz, had completely crossed the French line of retreat and had occupied the Verdun and Etain roads from Rezonville northward to Doncourt; and it was, besides, supported by the remaining corps which had taken part in the operations at Metz. The German generals now had nine corps and part of another in hand; and as reinforcements had already reached them, they had probably a force of 230,000 men wherewith to operate against their antagonist. As the French left at Gravelotte was prodigiously strong, and it was very difficult to carry that position, they resolved to move a large part of this vast array across the front of Bazaine's army, to assail and turn his right wing, while the left was simultaneously attacked; hoping that,

through the pressure thus brought on it, the whole French line would gradually give way, would lose the Verdun and Etain roads, and would be driven under the guns of Metz, there to be isolated and completely cut off. For this purpose, not less than five corps were to execute the great turning movement, while three occupied the French left, one corps only and part of another being held in reserve to the east of Metz, to guard the communications with the frontier. The march across the front of Bazaine would be less dangerous than it appeared from the strength with which it would be undertaken, and because intervening lines of wood would cover the movement in a great degree, and prevent a serious attack by the French; and if successful, the operations of the day would be attended with vast results.

The popular narratives of the battle which ensued are defective, because they describe only what took place in one part of the field; and the best account which has yet appeared of the operations, considered as a whole, will

be found in a letter from the King of Prussia, published in "The Times" of the 26th of August. At an early hour on the 18th, the Prussian Guards, the 12th and the 9th Corps, succeeded by the 3rd and the 10th, broke up from their camps, and, having advanced to Doncourt upon the Etain road, proceeded to make the great movement to turn the right of the French position. The march of the columns was impeded by woods and obstacles of many kinds; and, as they exposed their long flanks to the French at a distance, Marshal Bazaine may have felt bitterly that he had no opportunity of falling on them. Meanwhile, the 7th, the 8th, and the 2nd German Corps had continued stationed at Rezonville, waiting to assail the strong French left, when the smoke of the guns at Privat-la-Montaigne showed that the attack on the right was being developed. This occurred about mid-day, and gradually the French right and right centre, from Amanvilliers to Roncourt and Jaumont, was beset by a vast host of assailants, who, issuing

from the woods and swarming up the heights, endeavoured to seize the road to Sedan and to break through or outflank the enemy's line. The resistance, however, was fierce and obstinate; every point of defence was hotly contested; and it was not until the afternoon had advanced that St. Privat was stormed by the Prussian Guards, and a lodgment effected in the French position. Meantime the Germans, who, since noon, had been skirmishing near Gravelotte, had advanced in force against the French left, and had made a tremendous attack upon it. The outskirts of the village were soon won, but the slopes beyond became the scene of one of the most murderous and frightful contests recorded in the annals of war. The French, posted in their intrenchments, or crowding in the adjoining woods, kept up from their ambush a devastating fire; while their artillery, sweeping every approach, and worked, it is said, with great precision, especially that of the Imperial Guard, mowed down the assailants literally in thousands. The hitherto hardly tried mitrail-

leuse proved here a terribly destructive arm; and batteries of these engines, which had been so placed as to be out of the reach of shells, did frightful execution at short ranges. In vain the Germans, charge after charge, endeavoured to storm the fatal heights; the onslaught of footmen was in vain succeeded by the impetuous rush of masses of horse; the battle hung for hours in suspense, while, below, the plain was filled with the dead and dying; and it was not until an attack to the left drove the French out of the first line of their works, that any impression was made on them. Even then the struggle raged fiercely, and though the discharges of the German guns enfiladed part of the enemy's position, hardly any ground was really won, and the resistance was as heroic as the attack. But, in the interval, the great turning movement of the morning had produced its effect; the right of the French had been outflanked and their centre slowly compelled to give way, and the line of fire which gradually receded from Verneville, Amanvilliers, and Jaumont,

warned the brave defenders on the left that the time for a retreat had come. They fell back sullenly, and fighting to the last; by nightfall the German standards waved on the blood-stained slopes over Gravelotte; and the whole French army, yielding the position, had retired under the cover of Metz.

Such was the desperate battle of the 18th of August, as nobly contested as that of Borodino. The French are said to have lost 19,000 men, and the sudden wail which broke out from Germany attested the fearful gaps which were made in her army. We have little doubt that, near Gravelotte, the assailants suffered in the proportion of nearly three to one compared with the defenders; nor is it improbable that the Germans were weakened by more than 25,000 soldiers. This proves the energy of the French resistance, and does credit to the tactical power of Bazaine, who, with an army wholly inferior in numbers, and already shaken by serious reverses, contrived to strike his adversaries with terrible effect. The dispositions of the

marshal, however, were, as we have seen, entirely defensive; and though this may have been unavoidable, the inability of the French to assail the Germans, as they were making the turning movement, exposed them ultimately to defeat. It has been argued also with much justice that throughout the operations of these days Bazaine was unequal to the emergency; that, conscious as he ought to have been of the extreme peril of being cut off at Metz, he ought to have endeavoured to have effected his escape by a night march on the 16th, or by a rapid movement on the 17th, along the road by Briey to Montmédy, which the enemy had not yet occupied; and there is reason to believe that the Germans feared he would try to break out to the south of Metz, or even on their communications to the north-east between the 16th and the 18th, and that had he attacked in these directions he might have extricated the French army. It is difficult as yet to judge accurately what Bazaine might have accomplished had he ventured on operations like

these; but certainly his strategy was deficient in genius, daring, and resolution, and his purely defensive attitude on the 18th was not that of a great commander. As regards the operations of the Germans, an impartial inquirer will pronounce that the long march round on the French right, though fully justified by the event, and, owing to the peculiarities of the ground, much less hazardous than it might have been, was, nevertheless, not without peril.* The examples of Austerlitz and Salamanca show what may be done under these circumstances by great generals who retain the means of striking during the outflanking movement. In the attack on the French left at Gravelotte there seems to have been a frightful sacrifice of life; for hours it was an unavailing butchery, and the cavalry, especially, was recklessly squandered; and, glorious as was the valour of the Germans, we are assured that Stein-

* The traditions of the strategic system of Frederic still evidently survive in the Prussian army, notwithstanding changes in the art of war.

metz, who was here in command, was not thanked for his manœuvres on that day. Looking, however, at the operations as a whole, if Bazaine had fought a good battle, and the losses of his foe had been immense, the German commanders had fully succeeded in their grand if somewhat ambitious strategy. The French, driven completely into Metz, had been forced off their line of retreat; their enemy encompassed them on every side, and stood on their communications with Châlons; the roads to Verdun and Etain had been lost; and nothing but a decisive victory over an adversary immensely superior in strength could extricate them from their position. Bazaine's army was altogether isolated and cut off from the other forces of France; imprisoned within the fortress, it had no prospect but to force its way through at great odds, or to surrender; and well would it be if it should not attract a relieving army to its assistance, which, in a vain attempt at a rescue, would become involved in defeat and ruin.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM the bloodstained ravines and hills around Metz the scene now shifts to the south and east, and we follow the movements of the corps which formed the right wing of the French army and of the victorious force of the Crown Prince of Prussia. Mac-Mahon, as we have seen, after the defeat of Woerth, had rallied the wreck of his troops at Saverne, and had marched westward in hot haste, abandoning the whole line of the Vosges, and the part of his corps which had been driven from his right upon Hagenau and Strasburg. The marshal, following the great highway by Sarrebourg and Luneville, reached Nancy, and there, on the 12th of August, he effected his junction with the portion of the 6th Corps

which had been left at that place, the remainder having, as has been said, been detached previously to Bazaine at Metz. Retreating with this collective force, he reached Châlons on the 16th, this well-known position at the junction of the roads that lead directly from the Vosges, and covering the approaches to Paris, being evidently that on which the whole French army, falling back from the frontier, ought to concentrate. He had perhaps 30,000 men, the remains of his own, the 1st Corps, being however reduced to 15,000; and these troops, worn out, demoralized, and beaten, and in need of every appliance of war, required to be completely reorganized. Within a few days the French marshal received a considerable reinforcement, composed of the 12th Corps, under General Lebrun, which had been hastily put together, and of a mass of marines and Gardes Mobiles, the administration of Count Palikao, which had replaced that of M. Ollivier, having strained every nerve to repair the losses caused by the disasters of Forbach and Woerth.

These troops, however, were of very inferior quality to the well-trained legions which had fought beyond the Vosges; they were raw, undisciplined, and ignorant of their commanders, and weeks must have elapsed before they could have formed a really powerful military force. Meanwhile the 7th corps—that of General Douay, the only one in the first French line which had hitherto remained intact—had been hurried from Belfort to Châlons; and the 5th Corps had arrived from Bitsche, having, by a forced march from Fenétrange and Nancy, escaped along the west of the Vosges, between the hostile armies on either side. It is due to an unfortunate commander who in this campaign has tarnished renown deservedly won in 1859, to say that this movement was well executed; and though it is not improbable that the fortifications of Bitsche, which checked a detachment of the Crown Prince of Prussia, contributed to de Failly's safety, his retreat appears to have been quick and judicious. By the 20th of August Marshal Mac-Mahon,

who had been rejoined by the Emperor from Metz, had concentrated in the great camp at Châlons from 130,000 to 150,000 men, with, it is said, more than five hundred guns; but this force, however imposing in numbers, was composed of elements which made it unsafe and feeble as an instrument of war.

While the right wing of the French army had in this manner avoided destruction, and was being recruited on every side, though separated from the centre and left at Metz, the triumphant forces of the Crown Prince were following through the passes of the Vosges. After the battle of Woerth, the German left wing seems to have been divided into three parts, unequal, however, in power and numbers; and, isolated as it was in a great degree by the intervening barrier of the Vosges, it advanced leisurely and with caution, notwithstanding the victory it had won. A cavalry detachment certainly moved from Niederbronn through the pass by Bitsche, and thus brought the Crown Prince's right

into communication with the left of Prince Frederic Charles; but the fortress, antiquated as it is, seems to have barred the way to a greater force, and this, as we have said, not only probably contributed largely to the escape of de Failly, but impeded the march of the Crown Prince's whole army by closing one road to some of his columns. The Crown Prince's left at the same time had advanced from Hagenau upon Strasburg, and the Baden division and part of the Wurtembergers were told off for the siege of the great fortress, which, though ill-garrisoned and containing many of the dispirited stragglers from Mac-Mahon's army, was, with the adjoining town, to make a brave defence, under the command of the veteran Uhrich. On the 10th of August, the 6th German Corps, which had been in the rear on the day of Woerth, supplied the place of the besiegers of Strasburg, and this wing was moved along the great route which leads westward into the interior. Meanwhile the main body of the Crown Prince's army had been making its way along

the roads athwart the Vosges to this main line; and it had been a good deal delayed by the fortresses in the hills, which, though old-fashioned and of little strength, proved, nevertheless, extremely troublesome. La Petite Pierre was frightened into a surrender, but Phalsburg, like its sister Bitsche, to the northward, defied gallantly the German summons, and it was found necessary to mask these small places, which long remained, as it were, islanded amid the raging flood of Teutonic invasion, and the importance of which in checking an enemy will be appreciated by the military student. It was the 13th of August before the Crown Prince's columns reached the great western route, beyond the Vosges, at Sarrebourg; and it was not certainly until the 17th that his infantry, at least in any great force, had advanced at Nancy near the Upper Moselle, though his light cavalry—those formidable troops which combine the discipline of the European with the swiftness of the Asiatic horseman, and remind us of Prussia's share in

Poland—had pushed forward rapidly before, and already scoured the plains of Champagne. It was not the memory of their prowess at Woerth, as Marshal Mac-Mahon told his men, but the resistance of the hill forts of the Vosges, and, in some measure, its leader's circumspection, which had retarded the German army, had saved the defeated French right wing, and had gained a few days for France to collect new levies with which to renew the contest.

By the 20th of August the Crown Prince's columns had not advanced far beyond Nancy, though his Uhlans had reached St. Dizier and Vitry. This delay was caused by the necessity of keeping the Third German Army in communication with the First and Second engaged at Metz, and by the resolve which had been formed to detach, after the victory of the 18th, a considerable body to the support of the Crown Prince, and cover his right wing as he moved towards Châlons. On the 21st Mac-Mahon, who up to this time had been endeavouring to reorganize his

troops, and had only just been rejoined by de Failly, broke up suddenly from the camp at Châlons, and fell back with his forces to Courcelles, at the distance of a few miles from Rheims. What induced this move is yet unknown, but there is reason to suppose that the experienced marshal, aware of the quality of his soldiers, had determined to avoid an encounter with the stronger army of the Crown Prince, now only three or four marches distant, and intended following the course dictated by common sense and the rules of strategy, to retire by Rheims and Soissons on some point near Meaux, and there to threaten his enemy's flank and communications as he approached Paris. At Courcelles, however, a resolution was formed which, whoever its author, must be pronounced one of the most extraordinary and calamitous ever adopted by an imprudent commander. The whole truth has not yet been told; but it is known that a Council of War was held, and that Mac-Mahon, officially informed that a retreat on Paris would create alarm and

prove fatal to the Imperial Throne, was persuaded to assume the offensive, to make an effort to march upon Metz, and to effect there a junction with Bazaine, shut up since the 18th in the fortress. But by what route and with what means was this operation to be accomplished? It was certainly known in the French camp that the Crown Prince was marching on Châlons in too great strength to be attacked; it was probably known that powerful corps were being moved from Metz to his aid; and it might be assumed that the other German armies were in possession of the main roads which lead by Etain and Verdun to Châlons. An advance, therefore, by the direct routes to the Lorraine fortress, was not to be thought of; such a movement would only lead to a battle against very superior forces, and the object was to unite with Bazaine and avoid an engagement with the enemy. The French commanders seem to have believed that they had discovered a way to effect this object. Would it not be possible to advance northwards on the railway

line from Rheims to Réthel, and, pushing thence rapidly by forced marches through the Argonnes hills and across the Meuse, to reach Montmédy and Longuyon, and, descending from Thionville on Metz, and, perhaps, taking the beleaguering force in reverse, to relieve the defenders of the fortress? This plan, undoubtedly, was not free from danger, for the march by Réthel to Montmédy and Thionville would be a long march through a difficult country, in which the enemy might be able to gain and fall on the army's flank, and in that case a vigorous attack might not only baffle the whole operation, but expose the French to serious defeat. But until Réthel had been attained the movement would be necessarily masked; it was not likely that the Crown Prince would be in a position to arrest it; any German divisions upon his right would be insufficient by themselves to stop it; and, once Thionville had been passed, Bazaine would co-operate with the relieving force, and engage the armies around Metz. Besides, was it to be assumed

that the Crown Prince and the corps on his right, supposed to be on their way to Paris, would turn northwards at once to attack Mac-Mahon? if they did, could they reach him in time? and was it not probable that they would advance at once to Châlons, would pause, hesitate, and not act until it was too late to prevent the movement? In any event, if there was risk, the plan promised extraordinary results; and if the two French armies could reunite at Metz, not only would Bazaine be set free, but the German armies at Metz would be in danger, and the Crown Prince, advanced into the heart of France, would be exposed to serious disaster. It would then be the turn of the German commanders to be isolated and divided from each other; and what might not be expected from the soldiers of France burning to avenge undeserved defeats?

Such was the operation agreed on at Courcelles,* and such it is said were the reasons

* It is not yet exactly known whether the precise direction of Mac-Mahon's march was indicated in the official report he

for it. It is unfair to judge of strategy by the event; but it may, in this instance, be safely said, that a more extravagant and unwise scheme was never devised by the Aulic Council. It is quite true that at this moment the Crown Prince was many miles distant on the great road from Nancy to Châlons; and the result showed that if Mac-Mahon's army had marched with even tolerable speed, the Crown Prince, though he moved northwards, would not have succeeded in reaching the French, at least, until after they had crossed the Meuse. It is true, also, that the German corps detached from Metz to the Crown Prince's right would have been unable, on the supposition that they alone were to assail Mac-Mahon, to drive back and repel the French; and, undoubtedly, the presence of Bazaine at Metz would necessarily

received from Paris. It is only known that the Marshal was ordered generally to march northwards to relieve Bazaine, for, if he did not, "the revolution would break out in the capital," and that Mac-Mahon made objections in vain. But it is believed that Count Palikao was the real author of the project.

detain a very large part of the 1st and 2nd German Armies on the spot, and prevent them from turning against another enemy. Nor can it be disputed that, if it had been accomplished, the French scheme was extremely promising — nay, that, as some thoughtless admirers boasted, it might have been attended with as mighty results as the march from the Douro upon Vittoria. But in war, as in everything else, means ought to be proportioned to ends; and the step from the sublime to the ridiculous had been overpassed in this project. Let it be conceded that up to Réthel the intended movement would be not understood; that the Crown Prince would be unable to stop it until the Argonnes and the Meuse had been passed; that the corps on his right could not alone defeat it, and that Prince Frederic Charles and General Steinmetz would not be strong enough to turn on Mac-Mahon in force —the operation, nevertheless, was indefensible from any point of view. The French army, as it advanced from Réthel by

Montmédy upon Metz, would be moving along an extensive arc of which the enemy held at all points the chord, and that in very superior strength; and, if it were once checked, it would be exposed to most serious defeat and even ruin. It was almost inevitable that it would be reached by the German corps on the Crown Prince's right, as it approached the region of the Argonnes and the Meuse, for these were already not far from that line; and if this were done, and time were gained for the Crown Prince's army to come up with it, a disastrous reverse was to be expected. Nay, worse; even if these perils were escaped, and if Mac-Mahon made good his way to Montmédy, there was nothing to prevent the Crown Prince from turning backward, and having attained Metz, from effecting his junction with the other German armies and beating his enemy as he advanced by Thionville. In fact, the manœuvre being now contemplated was an immense flank march of the most dangerous kind, by a disorganized and raw army, with-

in certain range of a formidable adversary in possession of all the interior lines, and, when at all united, in overwhelming strength; and local circumstances not only rendered this march especially liable to failure, but exposed Mac-Mahon, if beaten, to ruin. His path lay across the Argonnes and the Meuse by indifferent roads and an intricate country, and, the Meuse once crossed, he would be close to the frontier along the whole way from Montmédy to Thionville. He was, therefore, going upon an enterprise in which probably he would be caught in flank, and brought to bay by superior numbers;* and in which, once defeated, he would most likely be cut off from the chance of retreat, or be forced into the territory of Belgium, where his soldiers would be obliged to lay down their arms. As for the notion that the Crown Prince would go on to Paris, and would not turn round when he had ascertained the direction of the French marshal's movement,

* It is due to Marshal Mac-Mahon to state that from the first he anticipated the disaster which was to follow.

it is so childish that we are surprised to hear it was seriously entertained.

This was the operation to save France and to annihilate the vainglorious German princes which paper strategists in Paris compared to the Alpine march which led to Marengo. It has occurred to us that its unknown designer may have had in mind the celebrated movement of Napoleon I. in 1814, when, leaving the Allies to advance on Paris, he fell back towards his frontier fortresses to draw in their garrisons to his diminished army. But there was all the difference in the two cases between the effort of genius playing its last throw and the blind recklessness of ignorant presumption. Napoleon, when he retreated on Vitry, was not sufficiently strong to cover Paris, then, be it remembered, wholly unfortified; he had reason to believe that the timid Schwartzenburg would pause and halt when the dreaded Emperor was known to be threatening his rear; above all, he ran no risk of being destroyed on his way into Lorraine; and once he reached Metz, it was absolutely certain he would be

rejoined by a considerable force which, after the glories of Montmirail, might at least have prolonged a doubtful contest. His movement, therefore, was compelled by his need; in a military point of view it had a prospect of success; it did not place his army in danger; and had the Allies been as feeble as of old, and had Paris held out for a single week, momentous consequences might have ensued. But Mac-Mahon had more than sufficient means to defend Paris, now well fortified; his army was exactly in the condition in which it ought to have been so employed; he, or his advisers, ought to have reckoned that the Crown Prince, as a matter of course, would turn on him as he marched northwards; especially —and this is the distinctive point—his advance to Metz along the Belgian frontier would inevitably expose him to danger, and very probably lead to a catastrophe; and, accordingly, the enterprise on which he was bound was not dictated by any exigency; it was precisely what should not have been attempted; it had hardly a reasonable chance

of success; and it might involve France in a dire calamity.* We never believed that a commander of great experience and proved ability was the author of this insensate scheme, and it is now known that Mac-Mahon yielded to pressure put on him in the interest of the imperial dynasty and of the political situation. This does not, however, relieve him from the responsibility of so fatal a step;† in his position he ought to have refused to lead his troops into evident peril; and if his military discernment was not at fault he showed himself wanting in moral courage. Does any one suppose that, in similar circumstances, the Duke of Wellington would, at the instance of any one, have staked an English army on this desperate venture?

On the 22nd of August, Mac-Mahon's army began to march definitively on its way northward. Its aspect and movements ought to

* These lines were written before the revelation of the order from Paris directing Mac-Mahon's march. But it was impossible to suppose such a commander the real author of the project.

† This, of course, involves a difficult question of military responsibility. But we adhere to our opinion.

have warned a prudent commander that it was unfit to undertake a perilous enterprise which required celerity to have a chance of success. The guns were ill-horsed and ill-mounted; the trains insufficient and out of order; the cavalry inferior and too few in number; and the infantry, made up of a medley of regiments, of raw levies, and of disheartened soldiers, was wanting in real elements of power. The Emperor hung on the skirts of the array, self-deposed from the command he had held, not like the terrible chief of his name, the mighty soul of his armed battalions, but encumbering them with the pomp of idle state; and with him was his imperial child, taken from the palace to be shown to Fortune and to behold the image of triumphant war, but already saddened by the clouds of disaster. It was not until the afternoon of the 23rd that the cumbrous masses had defiled through Rheims, and it is said that Mac-Mahon, even now anxious, and knowing that everything depended on speed, addressed some columns as they toiled

onward, and reminded them that French soldiers had marched thirty miles a day under the sun of Africa. The difference, however, was great between raids made by a few light regiments and the advance of a raw, unwieldy army; and though the marshal doubtless endeavoured to hurry his lagging men forwards, two days are taken to attain Réthel, a distance of only twenty-two miles. At this point, where the direction of the movement would be necessarily disclosed, Mac-Mahon evidently made arrangements for marching with all possible quickness; and it is due to a gallant though imprudent chief to give him the credit of this intention. He divided his army into three parts, and having despatched about 20,000 men by the railway line from Réthel to Mézières—they were to join there an auxiliary corps coming up from Paris under General Vinoy, and to close on his rear when he had passed the Meuse—he advanced in two great columns by the parallel routes which, to the north by Stonne and Mouzon, and southerly by Vouziers and Buzancy, lead

through the lower Argonnes to Montmédy. There is nothing to blame in their dispositions, the fatal enterprise having been begun, and we may believe that the marshal endeavoured to hasten forward as quickly as possible. But his army was unequal to forced marches; it had already given proofs of indiscipline, and even of mutiny in some regiments; it was especially weak in horse; and it moved at this critical moment with the sluggishness inherent to its bad organization. Encumbered with stragglers, badly provisioned,* and kept back by hindrances of every kind, it made hardly more than ten miles a day; and it was the 27th of August before its right column, still far from the Meuse, had passed through Vouziers.

While these operations, fraught with peril, were being conducted by the French commanders, and Mac-Mahon's army had committed itself to a desperate attempt to re-

* It is now known that bad commissariat arrangements had much to do with the delay.

lieve Metz, the German chiefs had not been idle in making provision for every contingency. Within two days after the battle of the 18th, a great force of Landwehr had reached Metz, to fill up the losses of the late engagements, and a considerable part of the regular troops was thus set free for new operations. A fresh army was placed under the command of the Crown Prince of Saxony, and it was detached from Metz about the 19th of August, in order to co-operate with the Crown Prince of Prussia, and join his right wing on his way to Châlons. This army was composed of the Prussian Guards, of the 12th Saxon Corps, and of the 4th German Corps, which had not taken part in the battles at Metz, about 70,000 or 80,000 men in the highest state of ability for war, and it was advanced by Verdun upon the Meuse with the view of ultimately attaining Châlons by the line of Clermont and St. Menehould. Meanwhile the King, with a few divisions, had set off to join the Crown Prince his son by Pont-à-Mousson and Com-

mercy, the intention being that the united armies should attack Mac-Mahon if he stood at Châlons, and, having overthrown him, should push on to Paris. On the 25th of August the King and the Crown Prince had fixed their head-quarters at Bar-le-Duc, still at a considerable distance from Châlons, the mass of the Third German Army being before Bar-le-Duç, and to Ligny backwards, though its cavalry filled the whole adjoining region, and had even advanced beyond Châlons. The German commanders were fully convinced that Mac-Mahon was awaiting them near the great camp, or was about to fall back on Paris, when the news arrived that he had turned away to Rheims, and was marching in a northerly direction. For a few hours they seem to have disbelieved a report really almost incredible; but, when reassured, the remarkable man who has been the master spirit of this campaign at once saw through the marshal's intention. We do not believe the idle tale that Von Moltke had an "anxious half hour," as he followed on the

map the French march, for he was in a position in which he could count on striking a terrible blow at his enemy. The army of the Crown Prince of Saxony, if moved down the Meuse, would be almost certain to intercept Mac-Mahon on his way; and, if time were gained for the Crown Prince of Prussia to sweep round on his antagonist's flank, what would be the situation of the luckless marshal, hemmed in on the frontier by overwhelming forces? A resolve was formed with the clear insight which has generally marked the German strategy; orders were given to the huge German line to execute a great movement northwards, and by the 26th of August the Crown Prince of Saxony was advancing along the Meuse towards Stenay, while his colleague was hurrying by forced marches by Clermont, Grand Pré, and probably by Suippe, to strike the flank or rear of Mac-Mahon's columns as they endeavoured to make their way eastward. The movement of the Third German Army was conducted with remarkable speed, and it was

evident that if Mac-Mahon was once checked he would be exposed to a crushing disaster, the two German armies when united numbering nearly 250,000 men, in the highest state of military efficiency, against, perhaps, 140,000, inferior in every requirement of war. The Teutonic masses rolling densely northward like some huge wave that blots out the landscape, already threatened to overwhelm the force that presented its unguarded side to them, and could not repel their mighty onset.

CHAPTER V.

LEAVING the Germans upon their march northward, we turn to follow Mac-Mahon's movements. The marshal's right column, as we have seen, had only passed Vouziers on the 27th of August, and his left, probably on the same day, had hardly reached Le Chêne le Populeux. By this time, according to reasonable calculations, he ought to have been close to the Meuse; and if so, a glance at the map will prove that, on the line between Réthel and the river, he ought to have escaped the Third German Army, about two marches still to the southward. As we have shown, however, this does not excuse the strategy of the French in the slightest degree, for before Mac-Mahon could have attained

Metz by Montmédy and Thionville, it was inevitable that he would be intercepted by the Crown Prince of Saxony, or even by the Crown Prince of Prussia, and would be placed in a very critical position. In the actual state of affairs the marshal was still about twenty-five miles from the Meuse, with a somewhat intricate country between; and as he was altogether late, and he must have expected that the German armies might endeavour to fall upon his flank, he ought to have spared no pains to advance speedily. Yet between the 27th and the morning of the 29th the right column of the French army had only its outposts at Busançy, while the left, though its outposts touched Stenay, was only at Stonne and Beaumont, both columns spreading a long way backward; that is, they were still a march from the Meuse, which they ought to have passed three days before, and their rearward divisions were yet distant. This delay has not yet been explained. We ascribe it mainly to the condition of the troops and to the mis-

conduct of regimental officers, of which melancholy reports have appeared, and not to the negligence of Mac-Mahon, whose dispositions when he left Réthel show that he had intended to move rapidly. Whatever the cause, the time was at hand when the fatal errors of the French enterprise, made worse by this calamitous slowness, were to become strikingly and at once conspicuous. The German armies from the 26th to the 29th had been making astonishing exertions to close on Mac-Mahon as he crossed towards the Meuse, and success was already within their grasp. The force of the Crown Prince of Saxony, advancing probably in two columns, had reached the Meuse at Dun on the 28th, and was thus in a position to arrest and retard the vanguard of the French army, whenever it attempted to cross the river. Meanwhile, the army of the Crown Prince of Prussia, hastening forward by Varennes and Grand Pré, and to the left by Senuc, and, perhaps, Suippe, had arrived close to the line of march of the right column of the French

marshal, and by the evening of the 28th, we think, had occupied it about Vouziers. A step further would bring this immense array upon the positions of the luckless French, who thus, headed upon the Meuse, and caught and assailed in flank and rear, would be overwhelmed by superior forces, and involved in a terrible disaster.

The operations of the 29th and 30th, though big with the fate of France and the empire, are even yet imperfectly known, and we can only describe them generally. Mac-Mahon, warned by affairs of outposts at Busançy, and to the rear at Attigny, and by a more serious combat at Nouart, of the presence of the Germans in force, appears, we think, to have tried to draw in his right column upon his left, in order to mass his army together, and, avoiding his foe, to cross the Meuse and make good his way to Carignan, still in the hope of reaching Montmédy. This operation took several hours, but it was executed with little loss; and, on the afternoon of the 29th of August, Mac-Mahon's

army was tolerably well concentrated beyond Stonne, and approaching the Meuse, its extreme rearguard still touching Le Chêne, one whole corps being left at Beaumont, in order to keep the Germans back, and a small body of cavalry reaching Stenay for the purpose, probably, of observing the enemy. But in the meantime the whole German line had made a corresponding advance; the army of the Crown Prince of Saxony had seized both banks of the Meuse at Stenay, and occupied the immediate neighbourhood; while that of his colleague had advanced beyond Grand Pré and Vouziers eastward, and was gathering on the French flank and rear. The net was closing upon the marshal, narrowing in as he approached the Meuse; and so well planned had been the moves of the Germans, that one of their generals some days before had indicated, it is said, the very positions in which the French army would be brought to bay. Yet Mac-Mahon, it is believed, was not yet alarmed; and a story runs that, on the morning of the 30th, the

Emperor despatched a message to Paris with the news that the Meuse was being crossed, and that a "brilliant victory might be expected." The French army now began to go over the stream, and two of its corps, having effected the passage, marched in the direction of Carignan, the next stage of the route to Montmédy. In the interval, however, a Bavarian corps from the Third German army had arrived at Beaumont, had surprised the French corps left at that place, and had routed it after a brief resistance; and, in a short time, the whole French force remaining on the left bank of the Meuse was driven in hasty retreat on the river. Mac-Mahon, who had been falling back from Stonne, attempted to assume a bold attitude; and he contrived for a time to retard his enemy, a gleam of his well-known tactical skill being seen, it is said, in the manner in which he succeeded in masking his retiring movement. Ere long, however, another corps from the Third German army had come into line; the chief part of the forces of the Crown Prince of Saxony

advanced to meet it from Stenay; and, as the French arrived on the Meuse, they were assailed with terrible effect at Mouzon, and routed with frightful loss on the river. Meanwhile, the remainder of the army of the Crown Prince of Saxony had moved from Stenay, beyond the Meuse, towards Carignan, and, menacing the French corps which had crossed, forced them backward in precipitate retreat.

By these operations the French army had indeed effected the passage of the Meuse, although it had suffered considerable loss, but it was in a situation well-nigh desperate. Its advance to Montmédy was completely barred, and it was threatened with a terrible disaster, with destruction, if it attempted to fight, or with being hemmed in upon the frontier, should the great German armies converging against it assail it in almost any position. The dream of reaching Metz by Montmédy, that is, by moving along an arc of which an enemy nearly twice as strong and active held the command of the chord, had turned out a fearful delusion; and a strategic error of the

gravest kind was to be followed by its natural results. No doubt, the slowness of Mac-Mahon's march to the Meuse, which allowed the Third German Army to get close on his flank and rear; no doubt, the surprise of the corps at Beaumont, commanded by the unhappy de Failly, which precipitated the retreat to Mouzon, and converted it into a disastrous rout, accelerated the catastrophe and made it worse. Nor can it be disputed that the German commanders made the very best of the chances given them. But these, after all, were merely accidents; and the French scheme was so essentially faulty that, as we have insisted, Mac-Mahon's army must almost certainly under any circumstances have been defeated by its opponents, and placed in a most critical position, before it could have made good its way to Metz. The remaining movements of the 30th of August may be described in a few sentences. The French corps which had been routed at Mouzon fell back along the right bank of the Meuse in a state of panic and demoralization, throwing

arms and accoutrements into the stream, and were stopped only when they had passed the Chiers, a deep, narrow river, which flowing to the north-west, falls into the Meuse near Rémilly, to the north of Sedan. At the same time the other French corps, which had crossed the Meuse at an earlier hour, and had retreated before the Crown Prince of Saxony, retired from Carignan behind the Chiers, effecting a junction with their defeated comrades between Rémilly and Douzy. MacMahon's army was thus collected behind the Chiers by nightfall on the 30th, but it was disheartened, baffled, and beaten; and the conduct of some of its officers may be conceived when it is asserted that the staff of one of the corps commanders were seen at a ball at Douzy that evening, dancing over a yawning gulf of ruin. Meanwhile the whole army of the Crown Prince of Saxony advanced from Carignan to approach the Chiers, while the huge force of the Crown Prince of Prussia, concentrating rapidly in its full strength, drew towards Rémilly and the adjoining country.

Such was the position of the contending hosts on the morning of the 31st of August. One chance, so slight that it was almost hopeless, yet to be noticed by the military student, may have remained to the French marshal, had he been the general of Arcola or Rivoli.* His army was concentrated behind the Chiers; the Crown Prince of Saxony was alone before him; and the Crown Prince of Prussia was on the left bank of the Meuse, at some distance, and with the river between. Might not Mac-Mahon, who had probably 110,000 men, have broken out and fallen on the Crown Prince of Saxony, who had not more than 70,000 or 80,000; have endeavoured to crush him, and extricated himself before the Crown Prince of Prussia could have crossed the Meuse, and overwhelmed him with superior numbers? No doubt an

* It has been urged, also, by competent critics, that Mac-Mahon might have extricated his army by retreating from Sedan to Mézières on the 31st of August. We think, however, that in that case he would assuredly have been caught in flank and rear by the Crown Prince of Prussia, while the Crown Prince of Saxony would have pursued him across the Chiers.

effort of this kind would have required troops of a high quality, whereas the French were cowed by defeat; no doubt, too, in all probability, Mac-Mahon would have been destroyed at last, for the Crown Prince of Prussia would have passed the Meuse and hemmed him in on the Belgian frontier; but, remembering the catastrophe which occurred, he would, perhaps, have consulted the interests of France had he attempted a stroke of this description. The marshal, however, resolved to take a position of a strictly defensive kind; and, if he erred, we must not forget that we are now reasoning after the event, and that very probably he knew his army was not equal to a great offensive movement. The position he took, though essentially faulty, and not as well occupied as it might have been, was nevertheless strong in its natural features, and, in his forlorn situation, was the best he could choose. Behind the Chiers, and in the angle formed between that stream and the course of the Meuse, a series of heights, intersected by

ravines, and with hills and intricate ground between, stretches from Givonne, on the Belgian frontier, to the ancient town of Sedan, on the Meuse; and, with the villages of Balan and Bazeilles in front, on the main road from Sedan to Carignan, make, with the Chiers, like a fosse before them, a succession of formidable lines of defence to an enemy advancing directly against them. Givonne, resting on masses of forest which spread densely across into Belgium, affords a good position to an army's wing, which could not there be easily outflanked; and as for Sedan, on the other side, it presents advantages in many respects as a defensive point to another wing. The town is on the right bank of the Meuse, with a small suburb on the other bank; and the river, as it passes it, forms a huge loop, which, flowing to the north-west and returning southerly, opposes a kind of double barrier to an enemy assailing it from that direction. Behind Sedan, and on its side of the loop, the eminences near Floing and La Garenne, crowned with woods and

villages, command the river, and should it be forced, could be stoutly defended against an attack to the rear of the town.

The 31st of August was spent by Mac-Mahon in stationing his army in these positions. He had probably not more than 110,000 men, allowing for the losses of the day before—the 20,000 detached for Mézières * appear never to have reached him—and about four hundred and forty guns; and he must at last have realized the extent of his peril. The Crown Prince of Saxony was in his front beyond the Chiers with his whole army, and to his right, on the other bank of the Meuse, spread the enormous forces of the Crown Prince of Prussia. The marshal evidently made his arrangements on the supposition that he would be attacked in front and also on his right flank, though it is tolerably clear he did not foresee how the Crown Prince of Prussia was to operate against him. He formed his army on a large

* This was the 13th Corps, under General Vinoy. It is now known that it did not pass Mézières; and its commander conducted it to Paris with much skill and forethought.

salient angle, extending from Givonne on the north-east to its summit at Bazeilles and Balan, and thence backward to the rear of Sedan, on its side of the loop of the Meuse, and just short of a hill which overlooks Floing. His left rested on Givonne and the adjoining forest, and it was composed of his feeblest troops, it being considered that it could not be turned, in consequence of the obstacles in the way, and of the close neighbourhood of a neutral frontier. The French line extended thence along the ranges of heights which trend back to Sedan, the right centre occupying Bazeilles and Balan; and Mac-Mahon stationed in considerable force his best divisions in these prominent positions, in order to hold the main road to Carignan and to give strength to his projecting front. The defensible positions along the line from Givonne to Sedan were made the most of; guns, with masses of infantry, crowned the eminences or commanded the wooded valleys between; and at some points intrenchments were thrown up to baffle the attack of the

expected enemy. The right of the French, stretching behind Sedan, was protected in part by the course of the Meuse, in part by the western edge of the town, and in part by an artificial inundation of the river which had been hastily made; and beyond Sedan the plateaux and ridges of Floing and La Garenne towards the town were occupied by large bodies of troops, though it seems to have been thought that a dangerous attack at this point was not probable. The Chiers, from Douzy to Rémilly, flowed directly across the French front, and opposed a barrier to the Crown Prince of Saxony. In this position, covered by two rivers, and behind obstacles of every kind, Mac-Mahon awaited the German attack, and the unfortunate Emperor, it is said, still looked forward with hope to the issue.

This position of the French, though strong at some points and formidable in its natural defences, had, nevertheless, the inherent defects of a formation upon a salient angle.* Their projecting front of Bazeilles and Balan

* See Hamley's "Operations of War," p. 310, Ed. 1866.

was liable to a cross fire; once driven in, defeat would ensue; and while their wings would find it difficult to move, the turning of either would imperil both, and cause the whole mass to recoil inwards, where it would be involved in terrible confusion. Sedan, too, on which, in that case, they would inevitably crowd for protection, was exposed to the fire of field guns from the heights and the valley of the Meuse; and if the slopes to the rear of the town were taken, it would be literally crushed by the weight of artillery. What if the Crown Prince of Prussia should reach these ranges across the inner loop of the Meuse, while Mac-Mahon's front was being forced by the Crown Prince of Saxony from across the Chiers—would not their enemy be, as it were, pent in a slaughter-house from which there would be no escape, and overwhelmed in utter destruction? The German commanders were not slow to see the advantages within their grasp, and on the 31st of August they formed the plan of enveloping altogether the French army, of hemming it in upon

Sedan, and of cutting it off from the one chance it might have attempted in sheer despair, that of retreating across the Belgian frontier. They had nearly 240,000 men, with from six hundred to seven hundred guns, and having this immense superiority of force, and the ascendency of unbroken success, they rightly determined on operations which, against a stronger and more confident foe, might not have been unattended with danger. The Crown Prince of Saxony was to attack and turn the extreme left of the French, assailing their front at the same time, and when their left was turned and their front shaken, he was to send a force right round in their rear, which, meeting a detachment from the Third German Army, was to close completely upon the enemy. The Crown Prince of Prussia, meanwhle, was to attack the right centre of Mac-Mahon at the projecting points of Bazeilles and Balan, effecting a junction with his colleague; he was also to overwhelm the French right wing, as it was thrown backward behind Sedan, and to the north his

troops were to meet those of the Crown Prince of Saxony, and hem in the French in the finished circle. The 31st was devoted to the movements required for this grand operation. The Crown Prince of Saxony placed his three corps not far from the Chiers, and along its course; the Crown Prince of Prussia moved his Bavarians beyond Rémilly, to cross the Meuse, and to attack Bazeilles and Balan; and, while he made preparations to cross the Meuse by the loop at the rear of Sedan, he held a large force on the left bank, and sent some divisions lower down to co-operate in the great turning movement to be accomplished from the other side. 170,000 men, with, probably, nearly six hundred guns, was to be engaged in the shock of battle; the remainder were to close round on the French, or were massed at different points in reserve.

Such was the plan of the German commanders, and, bearing in mind the strength of the opposing hosts and the great results of which it gave promise, it may be described as

one of the most daring and admirable ever designed in war. Though not without some chances against it, it was less hazardous than that through which Bazaine had been driven back into Metz, and if it succeeded it would assure the annihilation of Mac-Mahon's army. The night of the 31st was bright, and the horizon showed like a huge red vault as, far on either bank of the Meuse, innumerable watchfires marked the bivouacs of the armies awaiting the fight of the morrow. The morning, however, was thick with fog, and under its cover the advanced guard of the Crown Prince of Saxony crossed the Chiers, while the Bavarians, who had passed the Meuse before, came into line with his left wing, and made preparations to attack Bazeilles. With the negligence which throughout this campaign has too often disgraced the French Staff,* the bridges over the Chiers were not broken; and the first line of Mac-Mahon's defences was carried without

* Baron Stoffel has dwelt at length on the inferiority of the French to the Prussian staff. The event signally confirmed his remarks.

the least loss, the French cavalry outposts running away without attempting a sign of resistance. The Crown Prince of Saxony's columns were now directed upon Givonne, in order to turn the French left, and against the heights which protected their left centre, while the Bavarians pressed forward to storm Bazeilles, and force inward their front towards Sedan. At the sight of the Germans the bad troops, which held the important point of Givonne, began to swerve and give way, and, after a brief but decisive combat, the French left wing was turned and driven in, crowds of fugitives hurrying into the woods, while others fell in on the now pressed centre. At about ten o'clock the victorious Germans were sweeping onwards towards Ally and St. Menges, far to the rear of the whole French positions, to effect the junction with the Crown Prince of Prussia, which was to be one great result of the day; and, meeting no opposition on the way, they before long accomplished their object. Meanwhile a struggle of a different kind, and more worthy of their martial

renown, was raging along the front of the French, and the fortunes of the day long hung in the balance. The hill ranges were fiercely disputed; every slope was the scene of a stern encounter; and though the French line receded gradually before the crushing effects of the German guns, the fight was gallantly and well contested. Bazeilles and Balan were, however, the scene of the most terrible conflicts of the day. The French, conscious of their vital importance, clung with desperate tenacity to these points; and though the Bavarians came on with resolute bravery, supported by batteries which here were able to pour in a destructive cross fire, the resistance was long sustained and heroic. Napoleon III., endeavouring to redeem faults as a commander by personal courage, fought, it is said, in the midst of the ranks. At one time his soldiers succeeded in driving back the advancing foe, and at a late hour in the afternoon the murderous contest was still doubtful.

While this struggle was in progress another

battle had been engaged upon the extreme of the French right wing. Mac-Mahon had caused a railway bridge which crossed the Meuse to be broken down, thinking, probably, this was sufficient protection; and, as we have said, he does not appear to have believed that, on this side, his line was exposed to serious danger. Under the cover, however, of the morning fog, the Crown Prince of Prussia had moved a division over pontoon bridges across the Meuse at the loop in the rear of Sedan, had crowned with batteries the crest of the hill which overlooks Floing and the adjoining country, and had thus turned the French position by a move which seems to have been nearly a surprise. The Germans, pouring across the river, and under the protection of their guns, attacked in force the astonished French, who caught near the rear, had nothing to do but to defend the positions they still held. The struggle was obstinate for some hours; the plateaux near Floing and La Garenne, lined with intrenchments, were for a long time the theatre of a bloody

encounter; and some bold cavalry charges were made to dislodge the assailants from this point of vantage. The result, however, bearing in mind the great strength of the Third German Army, could never have been ultimately doubtful; and when the line of fire, passing beyond Givonne, told the Crown Prince of Prussia of the defeat of the French left, and of the progress of his Saxon colleague, he had more than men enough to spare for the movement which was to hem in on all sides the enemy. At about one in the afternoon the German line had closed in the rear of the French and cut off their chances of retreat; and, this being done, increasing forces were brought to bear against their doomed right, now being gradually forced towards Sedan. In vain battery after battery was brought forward, and horsemen assailed the advancing columns. The line receded from point to point, and, at last, breaking into a confused mass, it was driven headlong into the town, smitten by the weight of a crushing artillery. Meanwhile, after a brave stand, the French

were forced from the heights in their front, and Bazeilles and Balan being triumphantly carried, in spite of a most determined resistance, in which some of the inhabitants took part, the whole French army was huddled into Sedan, a chaos of broken and despairing fugitives, unable either to fight or retreat. Converging on its victim from every side, the German army enclosed it in a circle from which escape was no longer possible.

The scenes that ensued will be long remembered as among the most notable in the annals of war. For some time the German artillery thundered on the masses which filled Sedan, when a white flag, waved from the undefended walls, gave token that a parley was sought. The tempest of fire gradually ceased, and night closed on the woeful spectacle where, meshed as it were in a deadly coil, a ruined army, shattered and helpless, lay within the grasp of its mighty conquerors. Mac-Mahon had fallen early in the day, disabled by a severe wound, and the unhappy chief was so far fortunate that he

was spared the anguish of witnessing a catastrophe without a parallel in military history. A council of war was called at Sedan, and it was mournfully, and almost with one voice, admitted that the impending doom could not be averted, and that it was necessary to submit to the terms of the victor. Those who, endeavouring cheaply to win a reputation they do not deserve, or to trample upon a fallen man, pretend that they were tricked into yielding, that the Emperor is responsible for what happened, and that it was still possible to cut a way through, show themselves unworthy of the name of soldiers, and deaf to the voice of truth and honour. The only chance of escape the army possessed was lost upon the 31st of August, when the Germans were still divided by the Meuse. Now, when after a crushing defeat, it was at the mercy of an irresistible foe, no effort could conjure away fate. Napoleon III., who, during the battle, had fought as became a brave man, and who, his calumniators ought to recollect, might have easily crossed

the frontier before, acquiesced in what had become inevitable, and though he delayed a few hours, and tried to procure better conditions for his troops, he concurred in the necessity of a surrender. The French army, indeed, by this time, was almost in a state of dissolution. "Hell," it has been said, "was let loose in Sedan;" the bonds of discipline were utterly broken, and despairing officers had lost all power over a mutinous yet infuriated soldiery. The morning revealed the serried masses of the Germans gathered in terrible strength, and the smoking ruins of Bazeilles and Balan, destroyed by shells and fire the day before, gave an awful presage of what would be the end of Sedan, were it to attempt to hold out against the artillery ready to open against it. The hour had come; and by noon on the 2nd of September, the last army of France which remained in the field had yielded to the conditions of the King of Prussia, and, with the unfortunate Chief of the State, was a collection of helpless prisoners of war. Re-

spect for a brave nation, in its hour of trial, bids us pass lightly over the scenes that followed. When the news of the capitulation spread, curses loud and deep broke forth from the armed crowds which had lost everything, even honour; fierce cries of "treachery" and "revenge" were heard; and some destroyed and trampled under foot their arms, while others threatened to turn them against their own officers.* Yet the impotent fury of despair was vain; shorn of its pride and warlike array, the French army, broken into defenceless masses, was huddled into camps where a few guns and regiments were enough to control it; and the passion of the soldiery only provoked comments from the stern Germans for their want of discipline. Yet were there nobler spirits who, in their misfortune, showed themselves worthy of the French name; and eye-witnesses have recorded how the undaunted air and military bearing of many of the captives contrasted

* Scenes exactly similar were witnessed after Jena in the Prussian army.

favourably with the look of the victors. An army of 95,000 men, piles of small arms, eagles and battle flags, several thousand horses, and guns that covered acres when parked, were the trophies of this memorable day.

Such was the momentous battle of Sedan, the darkest spot in the checkered annals of the military glories and disasters of France. Neither Crecy, nor Agincourt, nor Pavia, nor St. Quentin, nor Blenheim, nor Waterloo was so calamitous, and modern history seeks in vain to find a parallel for the dire catastrophe.* The losses of the Germans were comparatively small, perhaps 6,000 or 8,000 killed and wounded, a proof of the inferior quality of Mac-Mahon's force. The French army was simply annihilated, caught, as if in a trap, and stifled by the victors. This consummation was the natural result of the fatal strategy which had led the French to the frontier of Belgium with a bad army, wanting

* Ulm and Baylen will occur to the military student; but the differences in these cases were great.

in every element of military power; while their adversaries, twice as strong and efficient, were in a position to overtake them and crush them by overwhelming numbers. Unquestionably the tardiness of Mac-Mahon's movements, the indiscipline of his troops, and the faults of his lieutenants, contributed largely to the event; but the original error was in the design of a march from Rheims by Montmédy on Metz, the Germans holding all the shorter lines—a march all but certain to end in disaster. If anything can add to the conclusive proofs of the awful folly of this step, it is in the consideration that Marshal Bazaine was not then in want of immediate relief; that Mac-Mahon's army was the main hope of France, and was instantly required to protect Paris; and that if it had fallen back on the capital the situation there would have been wholly different from what it soon afterwards became. We do not desire to condemn the fallen, but how bitter must be the thoughts of those who must now perceive that that very army, sup-

ported by the fortifications of Paris, and gradually becoming inured to war, would probably have been able to defy the Germans who encompassed and took the peerless city, of which the defences presupposed, and require a powerful trained force manœuvring within them. As for the manner in which the German commanders availed themselves of their antagonist's mistakes, and in a few days involved him in ruin, it is entitled to the highest admiration. The military student will not fail to note the prescience with which the army of the Crown Prince of Saxony was moved in order to aid the Crown Prince of Prussia; the readiness with which it was marched towards the Meuse; and the energy with which the two German armies were, without the delay of more than a few hours, turned northwards to stop and destroy Mac-Mahon. These are grand illustrations of the art of war; nor are the final operations less instructive by which the whole French army, brought to bay at Sedan, was cut off from the possibility of retreat, overwhelmed, and com-

pelled to surrender. The ability of the German chiefs was also splendidly seconded by their troops, who, in their operations, gave proof of power, vigour, and celerity of movement, not easily matched in military annals.

CHAPTER VI.

THE events which ended in the battle of Sedan marked the termination of the first phase of the memorable war of 1870–1. The contest, indeed, was not yet over; and France was to astonish Europe by the unexpected resistance of Paris, and by national efforts which, in her fallen state, were not unworthy of her great traditions. But the strife was thenceforward to be between the French people and the German armies; and though experience was to prove that France still possessed rich and large elements of military power, it is the simple truth that, after Sedan, her whole regular forces were as completely annihilated, and swept from the scene, as if they had been swallowed up by

an earthquake. The catastrophe of the 1st and 2nd September had reft from her her last army remaining actually in the field; and though after its fiery trials on the 15th, 16th, and 18th of August, the army of the Rhine still held out at Metz, it was bound to the great Lorraine fortress, and could do no more on the theatre of operations, than detain around it a mass of enemies sufficient to prohibit its escape. Within a month after she had unsheathed it, the sword of France had shivered in her hands; and a great empire, acknowledged to have been the leader of the continental powers, stood all but defenceless before its foes, its sovereign carried away a captive, its martial strength destroyed or paralysed.

What are the conclusions which sober inquiry should draw from these astounding disasters, and what reflections should we make upon them? A few words may be said on this subject, before we proceed with our brief narrative. Some persons judging by the present only, or carried away by mere parti-

sanship, ascribe the result to the inherent superiority of the German over the French soldier, and declare that the troops of Napoleon III. were naturally unequal to their antagonists. It is as well to protest against an error, agreeable perhaps to the worshippers of success, but at which the student of history will smile. It is quite true that the armies of France, during the whole of this part of the campaign, met with nothing but a series of reverses, and suffered defeats well-nigh unparalleled. It is true, also, that on several occasions the French troops showed signs of faintheartedness and want of courage, yielded more than once to disgraceful panics, and betrayed a tendency to break up under the pressure of sudden and heavy disaster. Nor is it doubtful—although for the most part the strength of the Germans was very much greater than that of their foes—that at Forbach, and several other engagements, they were inferior to the French in numbers, and yet gloriously won the victory. Nevertheless, we see no reason to believe that the

French soldier, in his natural qualities, had degenerated in the slightest degree, or that, under different conditions, he would not have proved a worthy match for his German antagonist. At Woerth, and on the 18th of August, the French fought with the most splendid valour against immensely superior forces, and maintained the unequal contest for hours, and the result was the same in most instances in which they were even tolerably commanded. At Forbach they were shamefully handled; beside that they were wholly outnumbered at Sedan, they must have expected a terrible overthrow; it is unfair to estimate a French army by Mac-Mahon's bad and ill-disciplined levies; and as for the tendency of French troops to break up when exposed to defeat, it has always been one of their characteristics, and is one great set-off to their impetuous courage. This much, we think, is due to the honour of one of the bravest nations of the world; and though unquestionably in this part of the campaign, when the ascendency of the Germans had

been once established, the French soldier repeatedly flinched, and did not appear his former self, the same phenomenon has been usually seen when success in war has been all on one side.* Impartial history will not forget how fortresses, after the day of Jena, opened their gates to squadrons of Murat's hussars; how the veterans of Blucher fled

* The following sketch of the rout of Jena from the pen of an eye-witness may perhaps surprise those who believe that a German army must always beat a French one. "The flying troops were scattered in all directions. Corps without their officers, and officers without their corps, cavalry and infantry, cannon and waggons, were all mixed up in one general confusion. To rally or reassemble them was impossible, and the only limit to the captures and slaughter of the Prussians was the inability of the French to pursue them."—*Bulwer's Life of Lord Palmerston*, Vol. I., p. 43.

Dr. Arnold makes these wise remarks ("Lectures on Modern History," p. 200) on the dangerous error of imagining that any one race or army is invincible. "Judging by the experience of the period from 1796 to 1809, we might say that the French were decidedly superior to the Austrians; and so the campaign of 1806 might seem to show an equal superiority over the Prussians. Yet in the long struggle between the Austrian and French monarchies the military successes of each are wonderfully balanced. In 1796, whilst Napoleon was defeating army after army in Italy, the Archduke Charles was driving Jourdan and Moreau before him out of Germany, and Frederick the Great defeated the French at Rosbach as completely and as easily as Napoleon defeated the Prussians at Jena."

before the charge of French conscripts at Lützen and Bautzen; how Wrede's battalions were trampled under foot even after Leipsic, in the forests of Hanau; how for years the legions of the First Napoleon were dreaded as invincible by German commanders. These things deserve to be borne in mind; they confute a faliacy in which just now Germany may be inclined to put faith, and through which France has been awfully chastised,—the notion that of the two races divided by the Rhine, one is essentially better than the other in prowess, courage, and ability for war.

Yet, though we refuse to strike a balance between the military qualities of the German and the Frenchman, made illustrious by the contests of ages, there can be no question in this part of the campaign as to the comparative efficiency of the antagonist hosts. The French army showed most of the defects of faulty organization and neglect, of that decline so often the result of false confidence and reliance on tradition. It had, indeed, a certain superiority in arms, for the chassepot

proved a formidable weapon, and so occasionly did the mitrailleuse; and it is greatly to the honour of the Germans that their disadvantages in this respect seem never to have diminished their courage. But unless the results they produce are immense, and affect decisively the temper of the soldier, mechanical appliances can never compensate for the want of real military power; and the French army, as an instrument of war, found itself defective in many particulars. The three arms betrayed faults: the cavalry was either thrown away, as at Woerth, or was turned to no account and ill directed; the artillery is said on several occasions to have been inferior to its former reputation; and the infantry seem to have been unable to make the best use of their arms of precision, and to have been often ill trained and unsteady. It is at least a question whether the distinction between the line and a few select corps has not been of a pernicious tendency; but much is to be said on both sides here, and the breakdown of the military power of France is to be

ascribed to much wider causes.* Passing from the ranks, where proofs abound of indiscipline and insubordination, we see an extraordinary want of confidence existing between the officers and the men; the men were too often mutinous and ill-behaved, the officers arrogant and overbearing; and, in the hour of peril, they did not stand to each other as would have been the case in a British army. Nothing, too, seems to have been worse than the general arrangements of the staff; it was ill-educated and unprovided, to a great extent, with the necessary requirements; its ignorance of geography was remarkable; and throughout the higher ranks of the service, going down even to the regimental

* In the same way, and very much from the same causes, the Prussian army was demoralised before Jena. "Such was the treachery of some of the officers, and the cowardice of most of the men, that, at whatever time the battle had been fought, the result would probably have been the same. The Duke of Brunswick's aide-de-camp, who caught him in his arms when he fell, and afterwards brought on his blue riband, said that as soon as the feu de mitraille commenced, the Prussians fled 'comme des perdreaux,' a strong proof how insufficient mere parade discipline is towards making good soldiers."—*Bulwer's Life of Lord Palmerston*, Vol. I., p. 49.

officers, a system of luxury and corruption prevailed, disastrous in its effects and tendencies. We think, too, we can perceive traces of that old vice in the French army, dissensions between the chief commanders; and whether the stories are true or not of frightful peculation in high places, by which battalions were infamously reduced, the administration of regiments and corps was bad, and the commissariat wretchedly imperfect. Nor was ability properly promoted; some of the most distinguished officers of France were kept back in a subordinate position; and more than one of the commanders of corps were the mere tools of despotic power. It would be unjust to throw the whole blame on the Emperor, for many of these mischiefs * were in operation under the government of

* It is a mistake to suppose that numerous defects did not exist in the organization and administration of the armies of Napoleon I. No one was more aware of these failings than he was himself; but being almost continually at war, he was unable to remedy them completely, and they were in a great measure kept out of sight by his genius and success. See on this point the impartial and interesting Memoirs of the Duc de Fesensac.

the First Napoleon, and some of them seem to be almost inseparable from the democratic organization of the French army.* But at no

* The speeches of Marshal Niel, and the remarkable pamphlet of General Trochu, published in 1867, had caused many competent persons to doubt the superiority of the French over the Prussian army, long before the beginning of the campaign. But when the above brief criticism was written, the extraordinary report of Baron Stoffel had not seen the light. This able and most interesting document contrasts the state of the French and German armies in 1868 and 1869, and, after the events of this campaign, reads like a prophecy. In every particular, numbers, efficiency, organisation, administration, staff, discipline, moral power, and military training, Baron Stoffel declared that the forces of Napoleon III. were far behind those of Prussia. He recognises, nevertheless, the high natural qualities of the French soldier, and thinks, as experience proved, that the chassepot is a better weapon than the needle-gun. The whole report deserves careful study. We have only space for a few general conclusions.

"The following elements of superiority will be found to exist in the Prussian army, and are peculiar to it.

"(1.) The deep and wholesome sense of duty is diffused throughout the army by means of the obligation of universal service, the army thus comprising all the manhood, the highest intelligence, and the best energies of the country, and presenting the image of a nation in arms.

"(2.) The intellectual standard of the army is raised to a higher point than that of any other country, owing to a system of general education which embraces every class and order of the people.

"(3.) In every rank of the service the sentiment of duty is developed more completely than in France.

"(4.) Special services, such as those for making military lines of railway, for carrying away the wounded, and for

time were they so apparent or attended with such calamitous results, and the truth seems to be that long success, the enervating tendencies of the imperial system, and the want of experience in war for some years, had greatly demoralized the French army, and that the Emperor had neither the capacity to see through its defects, nor the commanding genius which, in spite of them, might have still bound victory to its standards.

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telegraphy, are organised leisurely, with great care, and without lessening the number of those in the field.

"(5.) The fire of their infantry is more formidable than any, owing to the peculiar temperament of the North German race, and the great attention paid to target practice.

"(6.) Their field artillery is very superior to ours in accuracy, range, and quickness of fire.

"(7.) But of all the elements of superiority which Prussia would possess over France in the event of war, the greatest, the most incontestable beyond question, is the composition of her staff officers."

Baron Stoffel describes also, in eloquent and striking language, the difference between the eagerness for improvement in the Prussian service, and the presumption and vanity prevalent in the French; the enormous numerical superiority of the Prussian over the French army; and the moral distinctions so evident in the two countries; the one observant, cautious, united, and thoroughly disciplined, the other over-confident, careless, and demoralised by success and revolution. We repeat, the whole report deserves attentive study.

The German army, on the other hand, proved itself to be superior to the French in almost every military qualification. It is beyond question the most formidable power which has appeared in Europe since the First Napoleon overran and subdued three-fourths of the continent. It combines in the very highest degree the subordination which seems to belong especially to an aristocratic organization, the discipline which is the slow product of careful training and practice in war, the self-confidence created by recent success, and the intelligence caused by the high standard of education generally prevailing in it. As is well known, its special characteristic is that, comparatively weak on a peace footing, it can quickly assume gigantic proportions when "mobilized" and called out for the field, this result being gained by the close connection maintained between its constituent parts, and by the skill with which it is supplied with officers, so that its first line, its reserves, and its Landwehr form really one vast homogeneous mass in the highest state of efficiency

for war. It is in this respect that it differs so widely from the armed forces of its antagonist France, in which, though an attempt was made to fashion them upon the German system, a broad distinction continued between the standing army and the levies behind it, the first only being real soldiers, and the others divided in sympathy from them. In truth the German army, though in a great measure not a standing army in one sense, exhibits the astonishing spectacle of a nation marshalled into an array which has all the excellences of a regular army, and it is impossible not to see that such an organization presupposes the possession of very great qualities on the part alike of government and subjects. The power and resources of that army were terribly manifested in this part of the campaign. Its numbers as yet have seemed unlimited; and these immense masses have shown themselves component parts of one mighty whole, prepared and ready at all points for war. In every department of that vast service we find ample evidences of real

efficiency, and as a military engine, the German army is certainly without a rival in Europe. There is but one opinion as to the steadiness and energy of its trained infantry, whose skill in the use of the needle-gun and whose marching powers have surprised eye-witnesses, and as to the merits of its cavalry, more than once conspicuous for heroism in the field, and remarkable for its active performance of the other duties of that important arm; and Napoleon III., an authority on this subject, ascribed his overwhelming defeat at Sedan to the great superiority of the German artillery. The intelligence and knowledge of the staff of the Germans, and the general excellence of their commissariat, have also been repeatedly noticed; and though their whole system was afterwards put to the severe trial of a winter campaign, under which it was often said it would fail, it proved perfectly able to cope with the extraordinary difficulties to which it was exposed.*

* For a clear and able sketch of the military system of Prussia, see the excellent treatise of Colonel Chesney.

Even the difference, however, between the warring hosts was less conspicuous in this part of the campaign than the difference in the strategy of the rival commanders. We have already commented on the hesitating weakness, succeeded by rashness of a fatal kind, which characterized the conduct of the French; whereas vigour, boldness, distinctness of purpose, and combinations well planned and executed distinguished the operations of their foes. The delays by which the opportunity was lost of attacking Germany, when as yet unprepared, and of invading the Rhenish Provinces, the dissemination of the forces of France on the Saar far in advance of their second line when the approach of their enemy ought to have been known, the separation of Mac-Mahon from de Failly on the 4th, 5th, and 6th of August, the vacillation through which the retreat upon Châlons from Metz was postponed and two armies were exposed to destruction—these were palpable and ruinous errors; while as for the extravagant march to Sedan, it

stands out without a parallel among portentous military blunders. Even Marshal Bazaine, the only French commander who showed ability in this phase of the war, cannot be acquitted of want of decision for not having advanced more resolutely from Metz on the 15th of August. There was as yet time, and he ought to have known that the fate of his army depended on success; and if his situation was one of extreme difficulty, he was, we think, unequal to the trying occasion. On the other hand, the manner in which the German armies were massed behind the Saar, ready to pierce and destroy the first French line, the promptness with which advantage was taken of the delays at Metz to throw forward a force to cut the French off on their line of retreat, though it was scarcely expected that this would succeed; the ability with which an army was detached to the support of the Crown Prince of Prussia immediately after the battle of the 18th of August, and was so placed as to baffle the enemy whatever dispositions he made; and,

finally, the series of grand operations by which Mac-Mahon was hemmed in and destroyed—these are fine specimens of the highest strategy; and in the great manœuvres of war Von Moltke has rivalled the First Napoleon. As regards the tactics of the opposing armies, it is difficult to speak in our present state of knowledge;* but, except at Woerth, the French seem to have always stood passively on the defensive, a course possibly to be justified, but contrary to their general traditions; whereas the Germans invariably assumed the offensive with remarkable boldness. The German commanders have shown a peculiar predilection for assailing the wings instead of the centre of their enemy;† and though the great turning movement of the 18th of August, considering the superiority of force and the peculiar character

* An excellent account of the tactics of the French and Germans in this part of the campaign will be found in the "Edinburgh Review" of April, 1871.

† It is not yet clear whether this was chiefly to be ascribed to strategic traditions, or to tactics founded on an intelligent appreciation of arms of precision and their effects.

of the ground, was completely successful in the result, it was not unattended by danger.

It would, however, be unjust to conceal the fact that the extraordinary triumphs of the Germans were largely caused by superiority of numbers. This does not detract from the merits of their leaders, nor does it, as it happens, affect the estimate to be formed of the strategy of the French generals, who for some days after the campaign had opened had a great advantage of force on their side, of which they knew not how to make use, and who, when the balance inclined against them, ought to have done exactly what they did not do, and have avoided the extremes of vacillation and rashness. But in the actual shock of battle, except at Forbach, and before Metz on the 14th and 15th of August, the disproportion of force against the French was such that they could hardly hope for success. At Woerth they were outnumbered nearly three to one; on the 18th of August about two to one; at Sedan they were about 110,000 of, for the most part, bad and demoralized

troops, against 170,000 with immense reserves; and yet on some of these occasions they fought splendidly, and, in a tactical point of view, the battle of the 18th can be scarcely described as a German victory, decisive as were its strategic results. This fact deserves to be borne in mind in passing a judgment on the campaign; it may soothe the feelings of a great nation, overwhelmed by dire and repeated reverses, and threatened with the extremity of misfortune; and it may moderate the boasts of those thoughtless enthusiasts who imagine that a German must beat a Frenchman. If General von Moltke in this part of the campaign showed that he could make the very best use of decisive superiority of force, he has not yet had an opportunity of proving that he possesses the resources of those famous captains who have triumphed over armies greater in strength, and by genius, perseverance, and skill, have rolled back the tide of adverse fortune. We are far from saying that the great strategist and those whose movements he has directed may not be

endowed with these high qualities, but in 1870, as in 1866, an occasion to display them did not appear. The world did not witness in this campaign anything like the dazzling succession of efforts by which in 1796 and 1814 Napoleon over and over again defeated forces in all respects more powerful than his own; or like the far-sighted and sagacious conduct by which Wellington maintained himself in the Peninsula against enormous odds, and ultimately opened the way to victory.

It must be added, too, that these frightful disasters, as often has been the case in war, were largely due to political causes. As we have already seen, the fear of imperilling the tottering dynasty of the Empire, and not Mac-Mahon's want of perception, led to the extraordinary and fatal strategy which literally consigned the last army of France to destruction by the march to Sedan, instead of husbanding it for the defence of Paris, and directing it to fall back on the capital. There are, also, grounds to believe that dread of the revolutionary party and of the many enemies

of the Imperial Government was one main reason why the French army was detained irresolutely about Metz after the defeat of its right wing at Woerth, and did not immediately retreat to Châlons. Napoleon III. was apprehensive that such a general retrograde movement would precipitate him from his uneasy throne, and the simplest dictates of common sense were disregarded for this consideration. The condition, too, of the French army as a whole, its inefficiency as an instrument of war, the inferiority of many of its commanders, and its want of coherence and real strength, are to be ascribed in a great measure to the political circumstances of the nation; and, as often has happened, the vices of the State affected deeply its military organization. Napoleon III. and his most trusted ministers, nay, most of the public men of France, had been convinced for some time that a struggle with Prussia was at hand; but though imposing schemes for augmenting the forces of the Empire had been projected, the jealousy of Imperialism was so

great, and the opposition to it so marked and persistent, that they were very imperfectly executed, and even in numbers the French army was utterly unable to cope with its enemy. The precarious tenure, too, by which the Emperor held his revolutionary crown, made it necessary that he should entrust power to his adherents and followers only; and thus, while he was himself without the military genius of his uncle, he was compelled to fashion generals and marshals out of men who, with hardly a single exception, proved themselves wanting in the higher qualities which distinguish really able commanders. When the hour of trial and defeat came, the French army found itself without chiefs worthy of its ancient renown; and the blighting influence of personal government resting on a really unstable basis, had made it a body without a soul capable of directing it to memorable efforts.* In addition, the army was itself tainted by the ills at the

* This was written before the appearance of Baron Stoffel's report, which more than confirms it.

core of society in France, by a factious and insubordinate spirit the product of violent political changes, by want of reverence for authority, and deep and pervading moral corruption, the sad fruit of a revolutionary age, by vain arrogance and false self-confidence the result of past traditional success; and it collapsed under the strokes of an enemy remarkable for exactly opposite qualities. In a word, the terrible overthrow of the military forces of the Second French Empire may be traced ultimately to events and agencies which have affected the whole nation; and notwithstanding her inherent strength, her fervid patriotism, and her military instincts, France will never be again what she has been, unless she can regenerate herself.

CHAPTER VII.

We now enter what we have called the second phase of the great contest. The astonishing events of August, 1870, made France for a time almost defenceless, and opened to her foes a way to her capital. After the terrible catastrophe of Sedan she seemed incapable of further resistance; and though she was ere long to develope unsuspected elements of military strength, these were in such a disorganised state, that it was thought impossible she could withstand her enemy. Preparations indeed had been made, since the disastrous battles of Woerth and Forbach, to enable Paris to stand a siege; provisions had been brought in in quantities, and large bodies of armed men had been

collected to form a garrison; and in a few still intact regiments, in troops summoned from Algeria and Rome, in the Garde Mobile and depôt battalions, the material existed of a force which in mere numbers was still truly formidable. But Sedan had annihilated the last army of France actually in the field; the army of Bazaine, after ineffectual sorties on the 31st of August and 1st of September, was shut up in Metz, and invested by the forces of Prince Frederic Charles; and owing to its astounding reverses, the nation appeared completely prostrate. As for Paris, it was generally assumed that it would not make a serious defence; that such an immense city should have food for any length of time seemed hardly probable; the fortifications had been constructed before the period of modern artillery, and were supposed to be ill-manned and ill-armed; and, in any case, it was the current opinion that the peculiar temper of the great mass of the citizens—excitable, vain, addicted to pleasure, and liable to fierce and sudden impulses—made

an early capitulation certain. Under these circumstances the German chiefs resolved to march on Paris at once, and to finish the war with a sudden blow; and they confidently believed that the ramparts of the city would fall as suddenly at their approach as those of Jericho sank before Joshua. On the third day after the victory of Sedan the two great armies which had won that battle were moving upon the capital of France, though as yet hardly a single fortress of the invaded country had been reduced;* though Bazaine was still in occupation of Metz with an immense force, which might threaten their rear; and though they had not as yet mastered even one of the main roads or railways required to maintain their communications with the interior and frontier of Germany. Dangers such as these were, however, disregarded,

* Strasburg, the possession of which was almost necessary as a base of operations for the siege of Paris, did not capitulate till the 27th of September; Toul, which, in the hands of the French, commanded the main railway to Germany, fell on the 23rd only; and Phalsburg held out for a long time afterwards.

and in the actual condition of France were certainly, in a great degree, illusory; and the Germans pressed forward with an assured hope that Paris would soon be within their reach. Within a fortnight the Fourth Army, that under the command of the Crown Prince of Saxony, advancing by Vouzièrs, Rheims, and Claye, had reached the valley of the Lower Marne, while the Third, led by the Crown Prince of Prussia, moved through Rheims and by Coulommiers, had approached the Seine and the south-east of the capital.

During the few days which had elapsed since Sedan great exertions had been made in Paris to put the city in a state of defence. The Empire had fallen on the 4th of September, and the reins of power had passed suddenly into the hands of a Provisional Committee charged with the duty of endeavouring to repel the German invaders. General Trochu, an officer of high reputation, who had been made previously Governor of Paris, became head of this self-elected Government, and he addressed himself with

energy to the task of organizing resistance throughout the country, and, if possible, turning the tide of fortune. Though it is now known that his defensive projects were general and comprehensive, his first business was to place Paris beyond the reach of sudden attack, and to enable it to hold out for a considerable time. The difficulties in his way in carrying out this object were, without exaggeration, enormous. Though the city was already well victualled, it was necessary to add largely to its supplies, and though a vast multitude of willing recruits and third-rate soldiers were within the walls, these were bad materials for the huge garrison and armies required for a real defence. Besides, the fortifications were out of repair, and works were needed at several points to fill up intervals in their lines, and to enable them to cope with long-range guns; and, though Paris was a great arsenal, and several hundreds of heavy cannon had been sent in from Brest and Cherbourg, small arms, field-pieces, and other appliances essential in a protracted

siege, existed only in small quantities. These obstacles might have seemed insuperable, yet Trochu, seconded by the intelligence and patriotism of the mass of the citizens, applied himself to lessen or remove them. Stores were hurried in, on a prodigious scale, from distant markets and the adjoining country, and attempts were made to sweep the neighbourhood of food, in order to lessen the enemy's resources, though, as may be supposed, these were very partial. At the same time efforts were made to form and drill into an organised force the bodies of troops and raw levies collected within the preceding month. The ramparts and forts were garrisoned, armed, and strengthened at the most vulnerable points. The woods that checked the reach of their fire were sacrificed at a variety of places; works were commenced in the west and south-east to extend and to connect the defences, and to shield them from heavy rifled artillery; barricades were thrown up across the streets; bridges were broken down on the Marne and Seine with great

forethought to retard the enemy; and all the resources of the capital were put in requisition to manufacture cannon, to improve field guns, to make rifles, and to prepare all kinds of munitions of war. In an incredibly short time the brilliant city had thrown off its splendour and luxury, and, formed into a vast entrenched camp, made itself ready to meet the invader. Yet, as might have been expected, time was wanting to complete many of the defensive preparations, and when the Germans approached the city the new outlying works were unfinished; only a few cannon of large calibre had been mounted upon the ramparts; and the fortifications alone, it is said, preserved the city from an immediate assault.

This seems to be the fitting place to describe briefly these celebrated defences, which, seconded by the natural strength of the position and by some supplementary aids, enabled Paris to hold out, under conditions of the very worst kind, for a period of nearly four months and a half; and, notwithstanding the great increase in the power of artillery since

they were made, proved, in a military sense, invincible. The study of a map will show that Paris is marked out by its situation as a great stronghold and centre of defence, extremely difficult to besiege or invest; and the able engineers who fortified it made the most of its inherent advantages. The deep streams of the Marne and Seine, flowing in winding curves as they meet at Charenton, protect the city along its eastern front; and to the west their united waters, after passing through the magnificent scene which extends from Bercy to Pont du Jour, form a series of widely-spreading loops, which oppose a succession of huge fosses to an enemy advancing in that direction. Behind the lines created by the rivers an irregular range of eminences sweeps from the plain of St. Denis to the north-east to beyond St. Cloud towards the west, and guards the city along this vast space; and though a large section of these natural bastions—the heights of Montmartre and La Villette—are now a part of Paris itself, the greater portion is not included, and,

occupied only by village suburbs, is still an outwork of the great capital. Thus an invader approaching Paris from the east must first cross the Marne and the Seine, leaving these rivers upon his rear, and dividing his forces into two masses, and if he wishes to attack the place he must carry at some commanding points the hills we have already referred to. In the presence, however, of a powerful force, directed by an energetic leader, such an operation would be extremely hazardous, for an attack from the heights would expose the enemy, who necessarily must be disunited and moving upon a wide circle, to be driven back into the Marne and Seine, and the singular western loops we have described increase greatly the danger of such an attempt. On the other hand, the reduction of Paris by an investment or a regular siege, or by a combination of both processes, requires an assailant to spread his army over a vast circumference in separated fragments in consequence of the obstacles of the rivers; and until the eastern and southern

hills are mastered, the city is, in a great measure, safe, even from the ordnance of the present time.

The natural capabilities of Paris for resistance being thus very great, its fortifications, as we have said, were planned upon an excellent design.* The waters of the Marne and Seine were let into a huge wet ditch, which encompasses the city on all sides, and above this rises a lofty rampart, formed of a continuous wall with projecting bastions, which makes the interior line of defence. But it was never intended to leave the capital exposed to the horrors of an assault; and the object of those who made it a fortress was to render it almost impossible to invest, and to enable it to defy a siege or bombardment. For this purpose, an exterior line of distant defences was required; and though the city has ultimately succumbed, experience has

* "The principles," said Marshal Marmont ("Esprit des Institutions Militaires," p. 94, Ed. 1865), "on which the forts of Paris have been constructed, seem to me perfect." The Duke of Ragusa was one of the best artillery officers of his time.

shown how extraordinary was the protection it acquired in this way, and how, notwithstanding the great changes in the power of artillery in this age, it might have practically proved impregnable had the conditions existed under which it had been calculated that it would be besieged. The designers of the fortifications of Paris thought, not unreasonably, that under no circumstances could France be left without an army capable of undertaking operations in the field; and, accordingly, though the scheme they adopted was compatible with a purely passive defence, they acted on the notion that an imposing force would be ever forthcoming to repel an enemy who should attempt to surround or attack the city. With this object they covered Paris, at distances varying from one to three miles, by a system of powerful detached forts, so placed as to master certain positions, and, though in themselves exceedingly strong, intended mainly as points of vantage to support an army against an advancing foe. By far the greater number

of these forts were built on the eastern and southern fronts of the city, along the range of eminences to which we have already referred, the evident object being to prevent an invader from crossing the Marne and Seine, or, if he did so, to strike him heavily, and to compel him not to attempt an investment. On the north, however, two forts command the exposed plain of St. Denis, and though to the west and the south-west a serious gap in the defences existed, and the great fortress of Mont Valérien stood out alone to protect this space, the loops of the Seine made this front exceedingly difficult to approach or attack. On the whole, the forts in advance of Paris, though in some places widely apart, formed a very powerful defensive barrier, even for a garrison within the walls; though, as we have said, they presupposed the existence of an army outside, manœuvring actively against an assailant, and though, as we shall show, they were more exposed at certain points than they probably would be had they been constructed in very recent times.

Such, briefly, were the fortifications of Paris in the second week of last September; and, as we have seen, they probably saved the great city from a sudden attack, while as yet they were comparatively ill armed, and while they had not the support of an army outside to develope their real importance. In consequence, however, of their unprotected state, the invaders were enabled from the first to seize positions which gave them the means to hem in and invest the capital; and owing to the enlargement of the range of cannon which has been the result of recent improvements, they became in a certain degree vulnerable. About the 14th or 15th of September, the German armies had approached the streams which fence Paris on its eastern front, the Crown Prince of Saxony at Meaux, on the Marne, the Crown Prince of Prussia at Melun, on the Seine, their evident object being to converge from those points on their destined prey. General Trochu, who knew perfectly well the vital importance of preventing the enemy from closing in on the city,

and was aware also that some of the forts were much exposed to modern guns, had endeavoured, as far as was in his power, to stop or retard an investment, and at the same time to strengthen the external line of the defences where they were most weak. With this object he had stationed troops outside the eastern and southern forts, with orders to strike the Germans in flank as they advanced to surround the capital, and, if possible, to drive them back; and he had constructed and partly armed works on the heights which from Clamart to Châtillon bring the forts of Issy, Vanves, and Montrouge, along the southern verge of Paris, within the reach of the artillery of these days. The resources, however, in Trochu's hands were wholly inadequate to effect his purpose, and the invaders encountered but little resistance in mastering the approaches to Paris. On the 18th a feeble fragment of the French regular army, under General Vinoy, attacked the leading columns of the Crown Prince of Saxony as they debouched into the valley of

the Marne, but it was unable to offer serious opposition, and by the next day the Fourth German Army had drawn round the north and east of the capital from about Argenteuil to Sévran and Gagny. On the other side the French made a more vigorous and protracted effort, but it was not attended with better success. On the 17th the Crown Prince of Prussia crossed the Seine at Villeneuve and other points, and his army moved thence in divided masses by Bièvre, Palaiseau, Chatenay, and Sceaux, to invest the west and south of the city. In this operation some divisions presented their flanks inevitably to an attack; and on the 19th a large body of French troops under General Ducrot fell on the Germans, who fought for some hours at great disadvantage. But the French were demoralised by repeated defeats, and after a sharp but useless engagement, they fled from their advanced positions and refused sullenly to renew the contest. The victorious Germans now advanced on all sides without opposition; they seized the heights of Clamart and Châ-

tillon, destroying the works commenced on them; and by the 20th they had drawn their lines from the west of Versailles to the Marne and Seine, thus nearly completing the investing circle.

Had a real army of 150,000 men—nay, had even the army which had perished at Sedan—been outside Paris at this conjuncture, it may be said with confidence that, supported by the forts, it would have held the Germans at bay, and prevented them from surrounding the city. But this great condition of the defence was wanting; Trochu had no soldiers on whom he could rely to face the invaders in the field, and the result was that the assailants succeeded in encompassing Paris on all sides, and that the garrison was reduced to the necessity of a passive defence, and thenceforward could only fight at a disadvantage that would increase. The German commanders now proceeded to complete and assure the investment; and they went to work with the steady skill and energy always visible in their operations, though as

yet the notion of a prolonged siege did not enter their calculations. Their first care was to get possession of every outlet leading from the city, and to cut it off from the outer world; and for this purpose they were obliged to occupy in force the main thoroughfares, and so to dispose of their armed masses as to make an uninterrupted blockade, and be able to co-operate readily with each other. This was a task of a serious kind, for the garrison of Paris, raw as it was, was in numbers extremely formidable, and the area commanded by the fire of the forts exceeded a circuit of forty miles; and though probably the German forces were nearly 250,000 men, in the highest state of military power, it was obviously difficult to establish an investment over this great circumference, not to speak of the obstacles it presented. The work, however, was successfully done; and though more than once they were hardly pressed, the hold of the invaders on Paris was never, even for an instant, broken. The army of the Crown Prince of Saxony, kept carefully outside the

fire of the forts, was dispersed from the western loops of the Seine to the Marne before it reaches Charenton on a vast semicircle from the north-west to the south-east, from the Rouen Railway to the village of Ormesson. Here it met the army of the Crown Prince of Prussia, which also avoiding the southern forts, extended from Bonneuil to Châtou, by Choisy-le-Roi, Sceaux, and Versailles, thus crossing the Seine before it meets the Marne, and rejoining it after it flows through Paris; this mass, therefore, from the south-east to the north-west, describing an arc of very large dimensions. In this way, before three days elapsed, the investment of Paris was made complete; and as the city gave no sign, and it was abandoned to its own resources, its surrender was generally considered imminent. That event, however, was still distant; and not until after an arduous contest, in which victory long appeared doubtful, was the German banner to wave from the ramparts.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Germans having invested Paris, their first care was to secure thoroughly the positions they held around the city. Attacks from the garrison were not expected, but precautions were not to be disregarded; and, in any case, the spade would add immensely to the strength of the besiegers. A double series of lines now began to be drawn around the menaced capital, to repel enemies from without or within, and to seal up all means of approach; the outer line, it is said, forming a huge circle of sixty-six miles, the inner extending over more than fifty. Every day these intrenchments grew more formidable, and General Trochu must have felt keenly that he was almost restricted as yet to a

passive defence, as intelligence reached him that the links in the chains thrown round Paris became more rigid. Meanwhile, as week after week slipped on, and no signs that Paris would yield appeared, the invaders applied themselves to strengthening their communications and increasing their number, to preparations for a regular siege, and to accumulating stores and supplies to feed and support the investing army. The double surrender of Toul and Strasburg on the 23rd and 27th of September had given them what they had not had before, a main road and railway to the German frontier, and though Metz still remained untaken, had greatly improved their military position. From their base, stretching from Saarbrück to Kehl, they proceeded to clear and master the avenues that led to the French capital, in order to make their operations secure, and to convert what had been a mere huge raid into an invasion of a regular kind; and, for this purpose, it was necessary to subdue and take possession of some of the fortresses

which protect the north-eastern French frontier. Thionville, Montmédy, Verdun, and Soissons were accordingly either besieged or blockaded; and, while a vigorous grasp was maintained on Metz, reinforcements were poured in to assure a situation already acknowledged to be one of greater difficulty than had been anticipated. At the same time orders were despatched to hasten the arrival of siege trains from Germany, with the view of opening fire on Paris; and while detachments were told off to hold the main lines of the communications, flying columns were sent from the besieging army to collect provisions and other requirements. Starting from the capital on every side, these armed purveyors gradually brought a large zone of country within their grasp: they not only occupied the Isle of France, but threatened Normandy and the Orleannais; and while they swept in the produce of these fertile districts, they formed a kind of observing force, weak, indeed, and loosely scattered as yet, but intended to baffle any attempts to

molest the investment of the capital. These operations, as we have said, strained the German resources more severely than had been considered possible; but that Paris could hold out many weeks was still looked on as a chimera, and no thought of danger seems to have crossed the minds of the ablest of the German commanders. Indeed, after the fall of Strasburg, the troops which had taken it had been diverted to a new theatre altogether; instead of co-operating in the siege of Paris, they had been moved into Lower Alsace, to reduce the fortresses of that province.

Such had been the arrangements of the invaders during the period between the commencement of the siege of Paris and the last days of October. Gigantic as was the armed force with which the Germans overran France, it was fully absorbed by the enterprises to which they had committed themselves, and it was already heavily taxed, although their enemy seemed well nigh prostrate. Nearly a quarter of a million of men were required to maintain the great leaguer of Paris; two

hundred thousand were bound to Metz, to prevent Bazaine from making his escape; more than a hundred thousand were employed in guarding the communications and in besieging fortresses; and a writer with peculiar means of information has asserted that sixty thousand bayonets could not have been mustered at this conjuncture for any fresh operations in the field. Strategically, in fact, the position of the Germans was already not wholly free from peril; and in consequence of the unexpected resistance of Paris, those who recently seemed the masters of France, though still successful at every point, were really becoming exposed to chances which might have led to disaster. The true nature of the situation, and the favourable contingencies it afforded, were appreciated by the able officer on whom had devolved at this crisis the noble duty of defending the capital. Aware, unlike his German antagonists, of the immense resources existing in Paris, and of its capabilities of withstanding famine, General Trochu had formed a definite plan for en

countering the invasion of France, which, though, in our judgment, far from faultless, was, nevertheless, intelligent and bold, and which more nearly attained success than has been supposed. This plan was founded upon the principle of making Paris the great centre and gathering point of national resistance; of detaining the Germans around its walls for a period wholly unforeseen by them, and of organizing armies throughout the country, which should move ultimately to the relief of the capital, and, co-operating with the armed masses inside, should fall heavily on the invaders as they lay exposed around the great city, and, if possible, should drive them out of the country. And what would be the probable result should a really powerful relieving force once join hands with the garrison inside, having compelled the raising of the great siege? Might not the enemy, as his masses withdrew from the immense investing circle, be exposed to a series of terrible attacks, be possibly caught between two fires, and made liable to defeat in detail? Might

he not, plunged as he now was in the depths of a bitterly hostile country, perhaps find his communications destroyed, and what would his condition then be, especially if this happened in winter? In any case, if the line of investment around Paris were once severed, the siege could hardly be attempted again; the moral effect would be prodigious; and a favourable opportunity would arise to bring the war honourably to a close.

So reasoned Trochu; and, though he failed, an attentive study of the course of events proves that his hopes were by no means groundless. In order, however, to carry out his plan, it was necessary that Paris should be made impregnable to assault or bombardment; that a force fit for active operations should be formed from the levies within the walls; and that armies should be created in the provinces strong enough to make good their way to the capital. From the moment when he became Chief of the Provisional Government, Trochu seems to have directed his energies to these objects. The work of

strengthening the defences, commenced, as we have seen, before the siege, went on rapidly under his auspices. Day after day guns of large calibre, in many instances patriotic gifts, were mounted upon the forts and ramparts, until they bristled with formidable artillery. Huge mounds of clay were piled on the roofs of the forts in order to keep out shells; the southern forts, which, as we have seen, were especially exposed to bombardment, were connected by a series of batteries; earthworks and redoubts were thrown up in advance, and heavy ordnance were placed in them; and three or four positions to the east and south, from which the Germans had been dislodged, were seized and prepared to receive cannon. A constant fire was at the same time kept up to vex and molest the besiegers, and though it inflicted little loss it interfered a good deal with their operations. The result was that within six weeks the line of investment next to the city had receded at a variety of points, the chance of an early bombardment was lost, and apprehensions began to be felt

that the German artillery might prove too weak; and at several spots, especially at Villejuif, opening on the great southern roads, and at Avron, overlooking the valley of the Marne, works were being constructed which might become most formidable in aiding the besieged should they attempt to assail the line of investment. Meantime the forming of the armed masses inside the capital into military order had been continued without intermission. These, it was said, were 500,000 men; but, as we have seen, they were of such little value that Trochu had not ventured to lead them out seriously to oppose the enemy as he approached, a body only of regular troops having been thought fit even to make the attempt. To give consistency to this multitude, composed in part of beaten soldiers, of Gardes Mobiles, marines, and sailors, and of about 250,000 National Guards, to fashion them into a real force, to supply them with officers and a staff, to procure for them fitting weapons and guns, was a task of extraordinary difficulty; yet, though Trochu did not succeed

in making them thoroughly efficient troops, he trained them to fight and manœuvre fairly. Rather more than half of this composite array was employed as the garrison of Paris; the remainder was formed into two armies intended for operations outside; and though these were in a crude state, some divisions had already given proof of courage and improved discipline in three or four rather heavy skirmishes.

Meanwhile efforts had been vigorously made to combine the elements of military force still remaining to France into provincial armies. Bodies of troops had been summoned from Africa; the garrisons of Rome and other places were called in to aid in the work of resistance; decrees for a levy *en masse* were made; retired officers and old soldiers were appealed to to join the national standards; the naval service supplied gunners and well-trained marines in large numbers; and even recruits, it is said, were drawn from the military schools and similar institutions. In this way forces extremely formidable in mere

numbers were brought together; but they were unorganized and unformed, and the relics of the regular troops were, to a lamentable extent, infected with the want of discipline and the insubordination too conspicuous in the French army. Staff officers, too, were extremely few; there was a great deficiency of field guns fit to cope with the German artillery; and the commissariat and other departments essential to efficiency in war were in a wretchedly imperfect state. At this crisis a remarkable man, who, whatever may be thought of his judgment, possesses the gift of rare energy, breathed comparative order into this chaos, and, aided largely by patriotic goodwill, did much to organize the French levies. M. Gambetta, having left Paris in a balloon, undertook the office of Minister of War; and, under his supervision, the new armaments of France became by no means contemptible. Arms and field guns of excellent quality were largely imported and given to the troops; considerable efforts were successfully made to improve the defective

parts of the military service; brigades, corps, and divisions were formed and placed under experienced officers; and great attention was properly paid to enforcing discipline and strict obedience. Within two months after the battle of Sedan four armies were set on foot in France in a condition of more or less efficiency; and that this was accomplished is a conclusive proof of the great resources, high public spirit, and energy of the French people. At the same time masses of irregulars swarmed over the country and harassed the enemy, and recruits were mustered in hundreds of thousands, and drilled in camps laid out for the purpose. The armies of the East, of the North, and of the West—the first observing Lower Alsace and covering Besançon and Lyons, the second holding the line of the Somme, and the third advanced beyond the Sarthe, with its outposts approaching Nogent and Chartres—were as yet in an unformed state, and were hardly fitted to take the field. But the fourth army, called that of the Loire, was composed for the

most part of good troops, Algerian regiments and veteran soldiers, and was really a fairly organized force. Numbering from 90,000 to 100,000 men, with rather more than three hundred guns, and commanded by a veteran general, who had worked most successfully in improving its power, it now held the region just south of the Loire, between Chambord and La Ferté; and there is no doubt that its strength and qualities had been wholly underrated at the German head-quarters.

Such in the last days of the month of October were the state and position of the belligerents. The surrender of Metz on the 28th placed 170,000 men,* four marshals of France, 6000 officers, and one of the strongest places in Europe, in the hands of the victorious Germans, and set free nearly 200,000 of the invaders for new efforts and triumphs. The general importance of this great event was, of course, apparent at the first glance; but it was not known, until some weeks after-

* Including the garrison of the fortress, a large mass of Gardes Mobiles, and the sick and wounded of the army of the Rhine.

wards, how seriously its occurrence at this time affected the fortunes of the war. Of the immense force liberated in this way, one part remained to garrison the fortress; another, perhaps 50,000 strong, was despatched against the French Army of the North; a third, comprising a single corps, was sent to Paris to aid the besiegers; and the remainder, probably 75,000 men, under the command of Prince Frederic Charles, was directed to the south and east of France, intended to occupy the Upper Loire, and to co-operate with the army which, under Werder, had nearly reduced the fortresses of Lower Alsace, with the exception of the great stronghold of Belfort, and was now menacing the north of Franche Comté. The German Army of Metz, therefore, was not moved, in the first instance, against the French massed on the Lower Loire; and, indeed, a combination of circumstances had caused the German commanders, with less than their wonted caution, to disregard this force. One corps of the French Army of the Loire had been defeated

with great ease in the middle of October by a Bavarian detachment, which had captured Orleans and still held that city; and, as the entire body had since made no sign, its real strength was not at all known, and it was supposed to be worthless. As we have seen, however, it was a large army by no means despicable; and at this conjuncture an opportunity was afforded its leader of striking a blow of which the results might have been momentous. Numbering, as it did, from 90,000 to 100,000 men, it was separated, at the beginning of November, by a few miles only, from a single Bavarian corps of not more than 25,000, disseminated in a somewhat scattered order between Orleans and Châteaudun; this corps, too, it should be observed, being virtually the only German force between Orleans and the lines round Paris. The favourable opportunity was perceived by General D'Aurelle de Paladines, the Commander of the Army of the Loire, and it is due to him to say that his operations were at least planned with no little ability.

He formed the design of cutting off and, if possible, annihilating the small hostile force which lay temptingly in his front. For this purpose he resolved to cross the Loire below and above Orleans, in order by a converging movement to close in completely on his foe; and could he accomplish this, and sweep away the only real obstacle in his path, he probably intended to march straight on Paris, and endeavour to relieve the besieged capital.

How nearly General D'Aurelle succeeded in carrying out part at least of his plan is now proved by the clearest evidence. On the 9th of November two French corps, numbering probably about 50,000 men, had crossed the Loire and reached Beaugency, while a third, perhaps 25,000 strong, had crossed higher up near Châteauneuf. General Von der Tann, the commander of the one Bavarian corps, marched to attack the great left French column, leaving a small detachment still in Orleans; but he soon found that he had to deal with an enemy in irresistible force. He retreated at once with great

ability, disputing the difficult and intricate country on the skirts of the great Forest of Orleans, and after a series of severe combats near Marchenoir, Coulmiers, and Baccon, in which "the steadiness" of the French troops and "the excellence" of their artillery fire excited the surprise of the Germans, he fell back fighting on Arthenay, saved only by a forced night march, and having narrowly escaped a serious disaster. Pressed, however, by the advancing French, who, elated at the first gleam of success, found again the brilliant valour of their race, he was compelled to evacuate that place, and on the 11th he was at Toury, on the main road from Paris to Orleans. He was here joined by his detachment from Orleans, which had also beaten a quick retreat, and by the next day his little army was united, and held a bold front, though it had lost two guns and about 4000 men. His safety was due to his resolution and the admirable celerity of his movements; yet he could hardly have eluded his enemy's grasp had the right column of the Army of

the Loire, intended to close on his line of march, been directed as General D'Aurelle had wished. As it was, however, he had been severely handled, and for nearly two days he stood unaided, with hardly more than 20,000 men, the only barrier on the road to Paris, in the presence of 70,000 Frenchmen at least, who had given proof of discipline and courage, and had gained real, if not decisive success. Though, too, a detachment about 20,000 strong, under the command of the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, was despatched from head-quarters to his aid, yet, as about one half of this force was obliged to face towards Chartres and Dreux in order to watch a supposed advance on the part of the French Army of the West, and as the reserves of the Army of the Loire were within easy reach of the main body, it is certain that during nearly a week after the engagements of the 9th and 10th of November the French might have readily outnumbered all the Germans between them and the capital, on the main roads which lead from

Orleans, in the proportion of nearly three to one.

There are moments in almost every campaign when a single bold stroke well aimed and delivered will gain extraordinary results from fortune. Had General D'Aurelle on this occasion pushed forward rapidly, either by the roads which lead straight from Toury to Paris, or by the more circuitous route by Chartres, it is difficult to suppose that he could have failed to overwhelm the small force in his front, or, at least, to compel it to retreat with loss; and if so, he would have found his way to the German lines open. It is now known that when the news of the combats of the 9th and 10th arrived, very great uneasiness prevailed at Versailles—the head-quarters of the besieging army. The apparition of the Army of the Loire on the Chartres road was hourly expected; complaints were heard in the German camp that the siege was "a gigantic mistake;" the repulse of a few Gardes Mobiles at Dreux was eagerly magnified as a victory; and the great

general on whom devolved the direction of the German operations, alive to the extreme danger of a possible attack from without and within, had made preparations for raising the siege, should, as he feared, the columns of D'Aurelle be descried advancing on the French capital. But genius, boldness, and resolution were wanting to France at this critical hour. Having failed to surround and destroy his enemy, D'Aurelle shrank from following up his success, and instead of making at once for Paris, he fell back on Arthenay and Orleans, in order to obtain reinforcements, and to form an entrenched camp under the screen of the forest, intended as a base for future operations. This, we think, was a most unhappy resolve; but in justice to a brave veteran officer who possesses no common organizing skill, it is fair to say that military reasons of a plausible kind may be assigned for it. There is no proof that General Trochu, who communicated frequently with the provinces by balloons, pigeons, and other devices, expected relief at this moment;

if so, he might not have been ready to attack as soon as D'Aurelle appeared outside; and, in that event, the Army of the Loire might have found itself in a dangerous position. Besides, D'Aurelle was, no doubt, informed after the battles of the 9th and the following day that the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg was being detached from the German camp to aid Von der Tann; rumour would magnify the Grand Duke's strength, and, in that event, a cautious commander might well hesitate before attempting such an enterprise as a march on Paris. Moreover, most important of all, and probably decisive in D'Aurelle's judgment, Prince Frederic Charles was known to be on the way from Metz to the Upper Loire at that moment; a few of his Uhlans had reached the Yonne, though his main body had hardly passed the Aube; and the French general saw in imagination a large German army falling on his rear, and cutting him off from his base of operations, should he venture to move on the French capital. Add to this that the Army of the Loire was as yet

an imperfectly trained force, and that the depression of appalling reverses hung like a spell on the French commanders, and we can understand how a great captain only would have attempted the more daring course. Nevertheless, knowing as we do what an army composed like that of the Loire* accomplished in 1814 against very superior forces, we can hardly doubt had Napoleon I. been in the place of General D'Aurelle, he would have advanced without hesitation, and would have reached Paris without much difficulty. It was fortunate for the German host that the

* The following is Napoleon's description of the army which accomplished the wonders of 1814; and making every allowance for exaggeration, it shows what that great commander could do with an ill-organized and, except in parts, a raw force. "I won the battle of Nangis with a brigade of dragoons from Spain, who had not unbridled their horses after leaving Bayonne. The six battalions of the division of Nimes are, you say, without uniforms and accoutrements, and are ill-drilled! What stuff all that is, Augereau! I have crushed 80,000 enemies with regiments made up of conscripts, ill-clad, and without cartouche boxes. The National Guards, you say, are wretched. I have here 4000 of them coming in from Angers and Brittany in round hats and wooden shoes, and without cartouche boxes, but they have good guns, and I have made good use of them."—*Correspondence*, Vol. xxvii.

warrior of Nangis and Montmirail was dust under the dome of the Invalides.

The German commanders had miscalculated the capabilities of Paris to resist, and the power of France to reappear in the field after the destruction of her regular armies, and they had been placed in a critical position. As soon as it had been ascertained that D'Aurelle was not on his way to Versailles, they made arrangements for a protracted siege, and for protecting their investing lines from attacks which it was seen might be very serious. It was necessary to throw an impenetrable shield over the beleaguring army around Paris, and to substitute for the feeble detachments employed hitherto in this service covering armies of a regular kind, which, along an immense exterior circle, should baffle any attempt at relief. They applied themselves to this laborious task with characteristic skill and constancy; and though, as we shall see, they were afterwards more than once alarmed, the chances of France to turn the scale of fortune began steadily from this

time to diminish. A new disposition of the German forces was made without the delay of an instant. While the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg and Von der Tann were kept on the arc between Dreux and Toury, observing D'Aurelle and the French Army of the West, the corps intended to march northwards were placed on an interior line from Laon in the direction of Rouen; and Prince Frederic Charles received orders to suspend his movement towards the Upper Loire, to send a detachment to co-operate with the besiegers to the south of their lines, and to push "by forced marches" past the Upper Yonne, and take positions in which he could communicate with Von der Tann and the Grand Duke, and menace the right flank of the Army of the Loire, should it venture to make a move northwards. These movements were executed with the precision and celerity of well-commanded armies. Within a week after D'Aurelle had fallen back to his camp near Orleans, Manteuffel had formed a covering force against any incursion from the north,

and the advanced guard of Prince Frederic Charles, reaching Fontainebleau, Nemours, and Pithiviers, and approaching the extreme left of Von der Tann, had almost closed the vast semicircle intended to oppose an iron barrier to the French Armies of the Loire and West. The prospects of France, which on the 10th of November would have been really full of hope had a great commander wielded her forces, were overclouded by the 19th; and an opportunity equally good to repair her disasters did not again appear.

It is useless, perhaps, to speculate now on what would have been the probable result had D'Aurelle made good his way to the German lines. We do not agree with those who think that the Germans, caught between two fires, would have suffered a terrible reverse; Von Moltke would have certainly drawn off in time, as Napoleon did from before Mantua, when he became aware of the approach of Wurmser;* and it may be

* It is a significant fact that a German military paper of about this time contains a pointed allusion to the siege of Mantua.

assumed that the Army of the Loire would before long have been compelled to retreat. Nevertheless, the siege would have been raised; the armies in Paris, now in fair order, would have marched out and made the renewal of the investment in winter almost impossible; and it is difficult to exaggerate what the effect would have been on a brave and emotional race like the French. This indicates what a misfortune to France was the fall of Metz at the close of October; how, in the words of one in the German camp, the capitulation "came in the nick of time." Had the fortress held out ten days longer no additional corps could have been moved to Paris; in all probability the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg could not have been detached from the besieger's lines, no apparition of Prince Frederic Charles could have alarmed the chief of the Army of the Loire, and, in these events, we can hardly doubt that D'Aurelle, who had already defeated, would have overwhelmed Von der Tann and marched with his whole force to Paris. This

leads us to the painful inquiry whether Marshal Bazaine did all in the power of an energetic soldier to maintain his charge; and, though the evidence is not complete, materials to form a judgment exist. After a careful review of the marshal's apology and of the publications of his assailants, we think that Metz certainly succumbed to famine, and to this extent Bazaine is entitled, in our judgment, to an absolving verdict. But a concurrence of testimony makes us fear that the generals of the Army of the Rhine did not husband the resources of Metz with the diligence which might have been expected from them; and, above all, did not set an example of honourably bearing privations. We are constrained to believe that in the case of Bazaine, as in that of some of the imperial generals, endurance and forethought were somewhat wanting. Of his political combinations we say nothing, for they have not yet been sufficiently explained; but if,* as is

* We have already discussed the operations of Marshal Bazaine, and shall not recur to the subject. After the sortie

alleged, he prays in aid Prince Frederic Charles to justify his conduct, let him bear in mind the remark of Napoleon: "Distrust until the campaign is over the applause of an interested foe."

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of the 31st of August, which has been described as badly conducted, he intimates that he made no real effort to break through the investing lines; he thought it best to remain at Metz, detaining the masses of Prince Frederic Charles; and those who have studied modern war will not judge of him harshly for this resolution. But he does not explain why, after Gravelotte, and even before the 18th of August, he did not endeavour, before he was hemmed in, to cut his way through, an operation which has been considered promising.

CHAPTER IX.

We turn from Metz to the operations of the belligerents on the immense zone of which Paris was the chief point and centre. After the success of the 9th and 10th of November, which his timid caution had rendered fruitless, General D'Aurelle, we have seen, had retired to Orleans, where, screened by the forest, he constructed a camp intended as a base for his army. He fortified with care this position, which, though subject to the great disadvantage of being dangerously near the Loire, was well chosen to mask his movements and give him a favourable point to retreat on; and from this station he called in his reserves on the southern bank of the river, and the reinforcements he had been led to

expect. Owing to the energy of M. Gambetta and the zeal and willingness of all classes, these flowed in in prodigious numbers; and within a fortnight after his first battles, D'Aurelle's three corps were increased to six, and he had in hand nearly 200,000 men, with from four hundred and eighty to five hundred guns. The three fresh corps were, however, inferior in quality to those he had commanded; they were more largely composed of raw levies, in a great degree lads of tender age; and their staff, equipments, and general organization, were in a very imperfect state. D'Aurelle having devoted a few days to disciplining and improving his numerous forces, disposed them in a manner which gives fresh proof that he was well acquainted with the theory of war. Holding Orleans and Chateauneuf with his centre, protected by the forest and his camp, he extended his left to Marchenoir, and his right to the road from Gien to Montargis; these arrangements giving him central positions from which to advance upon the enemy, and enabling him to threaten all the roads to

Paris. Meanwhile, his antagonists had been making preparations, though there is reason to suppose that for some days they were not aware of his numerical strength, and though their movements at first revealed some uncertainty and even indecision. The advanced guard of Prince Frederic Charles, which, as we have seen, came into line from Fontainebleau to Nemours and Pithiviers, on or about the 19th of November, had nearly effected a junction with Von der Tann, whose centre held the road from Angerville to Toury, and though a few days were still required for the main body to come up, the Army of the Loire along this front was barred by a not insufficient obstacle. But, on the other side, a gap of a serious kind had been formed in the German semicircle, and this, considering the situation of D'Aurelle, ought to have given him a great opportunity. The Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, who, as we have said, had been in communication with Von der Tann, facing thence westward as far as Dreux, had been despatched in the direction of Le Mans,

in order to pursue the French Army of the West, the movements of which had never ceased to cause apprehension at Versailles. He had followed this body nearly as far as the Sarthe, and though he had been summoned back he was still distant from Von der Tann, and as late as the middle of the last week of November, was between Nogent le Rotrou and Chartres. His movements, too, were extremely slow, and had been, it is said, like "those of a corkscrew," for he was greatly harassed by bands of freeshooters, who swarmed upon his rear and flanks, and inflicted no little loss on his men.

Such, about the 25th and 26th of November, were the positions held by the armies intended to relieve and cover the siege of Paris. A glance at the map will show that the French strategically had a great advantage; for, from Marchenoir by Orleans to the road to Montargis, they had possession of the chord of the arc from Nogent le Rotrou, Chartres, Toury, to the left of Prince Frederic Charles, still somewhat to the east of Montargis; they held

the principal roads to Paris, and they could concentrate by shorter lines and more quickly than the enemy in front. United, too, they were in the proportion of nearly two to one to the Germans, for Prince Frederic Charles had not more than from 55,000 to 60,000 men, after the detachment he had made to the besiegers' lines; Von der Tann and the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg had probably not more than 45,000; and though, of course, the French troops, as a whole, were not to be compared with their foes, one-half certainly were very fair soldiers. These arrangements do very great credit to the scientific knowledge of D'Aurelle, and the zeal and patriotism of the French people; they show, either that the German commanders underrated the strength of the Army of the Loire, or were still exceedingly hard pressed; and though, as we think, they did not present as good a prospect of success to the French as was offered on the 9th and 10th of November, a great commander would have known how to turn them to excellent account. In fact,

D'Aurelle at this conjuncture was in a position similar to that of Napoleon when he invaded Belgium in 1815—with this difference, that his numerical strength was not half, but double, that of his foes. Meantime, the patient Governor of Paris had thought the time come for putting to the test the plan he had formed for the relief of the city, and had concerted operations for the purpose. He had now completed his system of defences; had made the forts as secure as possible; had armed and manned his new batteries; had thrown back considerably the besiegers' lines, and he hoped in the fortifications he had raised on the advanced points of Villejuif and Avron to conquer positions from which to force an opening through the investing circle. At the same time he had brought the armies within the walls to as high a state of efficiency and discipline as he could; and these now numbered more than 200,000 men, of whom, however, 150,000 only seem to have been, in his judgment, fairly good soldiers. The bulk of this mass was to endeavour to

break through the lines, while the Army of the Loire, advancing to Paris, was to join hands from the outside; the plan of Trochu, as we have said, always contemplating a combined operation, according to the ordinary rules of strategy. The last week of November was the time assigned for the joint enterprise, but much was necessarily left to chance; and Trochu, as became him, appears not to have interfered with D'Aurelle's movements, even if he had an opportunity to do so.

That General had now begun the operations which were to lead the Army of the Loire to Paris. He threw forward his right wing by Ladon, Maizières, and, perhaps, Montargis, without a similar advance of his centre and left; and on the 28th of November he attacked, with two corps, perhaps 60,000 strong, one German corps of about 30,000, which, in the neighbourhood of Beaune-la-Rolande, covered the roads leading to Fontainebleau and Mélun. The battle was bloody and well fought, the inferior quality of one of the French corps diminishing greatly its real

value; but, according to testimony from the German camp, "the position was becoming very critical," when two divisions despatched from Pithiviers inclined the balance against the assailants. The French retreated with heavy loss, the young troops, as usually happens, panic-stricken and disbanding in hundreds; but their antagonists retired also, leaving behind one gun and a good many prisoners. D'Aurelle, who in this operation had committed a grave strategical error, fell back towards his camp at Orleans, and remained inactive for two days, a delay which his adversaries rendered fatal. Prince Frederic Charles, who, we see plainly, had been alarmed by the affair of Beaune-la-Rolande, but had learned, perhaps for the first time, the real strength and positions of the French, perceived at a glance the disadvantage of the situation of the German army, and gave pressing orders for the concentration of all the German forces upon a narrower front, taking care, especially, to close the interval between Von der Tann and the

Grand Duke of Mecklenburg. These movements were immediately executed, and on the 29th and 30th of November the German columns drew towards each other, the troops from Chartrés necessarily exposing their flanks in a manner which a great general would have known how to turn to his advantage. On the 1st of December D'Aurelle began to advance again with his left wing, and two of his corps gained slight advantages at Arthenay, Patey, and Joigny, over Von der Tann and the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, their junction not having been quite effected. But the Frenchman had lost the golden occasion, and a heavy counter-stroke was being levelled at him. Prince Frederic Charles by this time had the whole German army nearly at hand, and resolved to deal a decisive blow at the enemy now, in turn extended before him. Directing one of his corps to Beaumont, he restrained and paralyzed the whole right French wing, and with the rest of his forces he struck fiercely at the comparatively scattered French left and centre. A series of

engagements ensued, in which the Germans probably equalled the French in numbers at the real points of contact, and of which the results were therefore certain. The French centre was broken through at Chevilly, and recoiled, routed, on the camp near Orleans, this disaster causing the right and left to fall away in eccentric lines, the one across the Loire by Jargeau, the other on the north bank by Marchenoir and Beaugency. A feeble attempt to defend the camp was made, but its proximity to the river made this perilous; "orders," as it was said, "led to disorders;" and by the 4th of December the beaten centre had passed the Loire, abandoning this position and the city of Orleans. The Army of the Loire had been broken to pieces, with a loss of 15,000 men and eighty guns, including those taken in the camp: the attempt to relieve Paris had not only failed, but had terminated in complete disaster.

"Talent," said Napoleon, "in a general is nothing without vigour and strength of character; and few men are able to direct an

army 150,000 strong." These remarks of the master are a fitting commentary on the conduct of D'Aurelle during these days. He had arranged his troops with much ability, but he had proved incapable to move them skilfully or to make use of his great superiority in numbers. In his advance on Beaune-la-Rolande he had struck at his enemy at the strongest side, entirely neglecting that which was weak, the uncovered gap between Chartres and Toury; and though he was in the proportion of two to one, he had struck feebly and partially. He might have attacked with at least 20,000 men more, and in that case he would probably have won, ill-planned as we think his scheme was; and if so, it would have been difficult to have intercepted him on the way to Paris. And what might the result have been if, instead of assailing Prince Frederic Charles, he had pushed in between Von der Tann and the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg with a force which, on the 28th and 29th, the Germans certainly could not have withstood, or even thrown his whole line

forward instead of advancing a single wing? In truth, his movements on the 28th were vacillating, tentative, doubtful, and weak; and they not only led to defeat, but enabled his antagonists to form their plans. His hesitation, too, on the 1st of December, which allowed Prince Frederic Charles to collect his comparatively small and ill-united army within striking distance of the French, superior in numbers and better concentrated, the puny efforts he then made, and, finally, the remissness with which he witnessed his enemy close upon his centre and crush it between his disseminated wings, are proofs of incompetence for high command; and it is the simple truth that he threw away fair chances, and ultimately was disastrously beaten in the main through palpably bad generalship. Contrast with this his enemy's movements. It is idle to say that the German army was not dangerously divided at first, or that the single corps of Prince Frederic Charles was not seriously threatened on the 28th of November. A great

commander in this state of circumstances might have led the French to victory. But, the peril once seen, with what clear insight the Prussian chief averted it, and plucked from it safety! With what ability he drew together his forces, availing himself of the slackness of his foe; and, having once united them, prepared for the stroke which was to assure complete success! How skilfully he held one of the French wings in check with a force probably not a third its numbers, while he collected the mass which he rightly calculated would suffice to overwhelm D'Aurelle's centre! That Prince Frederic Charles within four days was able to concentrate under D'Aurelle's eyes, and, with an army numerically very inferior, to be irresistible at the decisive point, marks him out as no ordinary commander; and the more these operations are studied, the more it will appear that superior strategy was rather the cause of the defeat of the French, than the bad quality of part of their troops. Events, indeed, were quickly to show how a fragment

of the Army of the Loire under another commander could contend with honour against a victorious enemy.

While these important events had been occurring north and south of Orleans, Paris had been making a mighty effort to shatter the iron chains thrown round her. On the night of the 28th of November, the forts, especially those to the south, burst out in a terrific cannonade, and a continual tempest of shot and shell rained forth on the besiegers' lines from St. Germain to the confluence of the Marne and Seine. Under the cover of this fire, intended, possibly, as a signal to the friendly Army of the Loire, supposed to be not far off at this time, as well as to annoy the enemy, masses of troops poured forth on the slopes beyond the forts of Montrouge, Bicêtre, and Ivry, and, aided by gunboats upon the Seine, by the batteries of Villejeuf, and by their own field guns, endeavoured to carry the positions of L'Hay, Chevilly, and Choisy-le-Roi, near the investing circle on the roads to Orleans. It had been intended

to combine this operation with a great effort to the east and south-east; but a sudden rising of the waters of the Marne had made this impossible that day, and the French retired after an indecisive encounter. The cannonade was resumed on the following night; and on the morning of the 30th a large army, commanded by Generals Vinoy and Ducrot, moved from under the south-eastern and eastern forts to attack on these sides the German intrenchments. The attack of Vinoy to the south-east seems to have been intended as a feint only, like a similar one from St. Denis on the north; but that of Ducrot was extremely formidable. At the head of perhaps 60,000 men, supported by considerable reserves, he crossed the Marne on pontoon bridges thrown across its curves in front of Vincennes; and while he launched one column upon Bonneuil, in the peninsula between that river and the Seine, he threw the bulk of his troops on the four villages of Noisy-le-Grand, Brie, Villiers, and Champigny, outposts of the eastern lines of invest-

ment. The French advanced in excellent order under the guns of the forts of Nogent and Rosny, of redoubts between, and of the new work of Avron; and, after a brief but murderous struggle, they carried Villiers, Champigny, and Brie, the German troops at these points being overwhelmed by superior numbers. Noisy-le-Grand was also seriously threatened; and the assailants had a decided advantage along the whole battle-field for several hours, their force being too great to resist, although, owing to the nature of the ground, it was impossible fully to deploy the columns and to make the whole power of their fire felt. At last the Germans were reinforced, and Villiers was retaken after a fierce encounter; but Brie and Champigny remained in the hands of the French, who had thus won positions which might prove of much value for ulterior operations.

In these engagements the French had displayed unquestionable bravery and steadiness. They were different men from the cowardly soldiers who had fled on the 19th of September;

and though unequal to their German foes, strung to the height of daring by continual success, they had fought well and manœuvred fairly. The power and range of their field guns —12-pounders rifled during the siege—had especially surprised their antagonists; and it had become evident that the Governor of Paris had created out of rude masses of men a disciplined and tolerably efficient army. The French, however, on the 30th of November, had not reached the besiegers' lines; they had only won advanced posts from which they could gather and attack in force; yet, as these made their position threatening, their success was real, though incomplete. It is hard to say what the result might have been if Ducrot, sacrificing every consideration to the primary object of breaking out, had called in during the night his reserves, and, advancing from Brie and Champigny, had endeavoured to storm next day the German intrenchments; he could certainly have opposed four men to one, and he would have begun with some advantages of ground; and

even those who fully appreciate the obstacles he would have had to overcome, will, at least, doubt whether he might not have triumphed. As we have seen, however, the plan of Trochu did not contemplate an independent effort to force a way through the investing lines, and accordingly, waiting no doubt to hear the guns of the approaching Army of the Loire, he paused at this critical moment. The whole French army, under Ducrot, remained inactive on the 1st of December, repairing losses and collecting supplies, and though it still held its ground beyond the Marne, it seems not to have been largely reinforced. Meanwhile orders had been given from Versailles to retake "Brie and Champigny at any cost," and to drive the French behind the Marne; and for this purpose as many men as could be spared had been massed together. On the morning of the 2nd the Germans assumed the offensive and captured Brie by surprise; and they seem to have nearly seized Champigny, the French certainly not being in sufficient force at that important position.

The assailants now proceeded to attack their foes and carry the bridges upon the Marne, when on a sudden, a terrible transformation changed the whole aspect of the field of battle. During the preceding day the neighbouring forts and batteries had received many additional guns, and, as the Germans advanced and the French retired, with orders, it would seem, for the purpose, a most tremendous fire burst on the attacking columns. In vain, exulting in the pride of success, the Germans pressed forward with shouts of defiance; in vain officers broke from their ranks and cheered them on against the receding enemy; whole files were literally swept away, until at last, after a heroic effort, the retreat was sounded, and the German front fell back mutilated by horrible losses. The tide of battle turned again; the French pressed forward in dense masses, and by the afternoon the tricolour was once more seen in Champigny and Brie.

"A cautious man of strategic science"—such was the opinion formed years ago of General Trochu by an acute observer. The

Governor of Paris had witnessed the vicissitudes of this memorable day, and he had seen his enemy, frightfully thinned, recoil baffled, if not routed. Nevertheless, rigidly adhering to his plan, he did not attempt to improve his advantage, and still expecting the Army of the Loire, he contented himself with maintaining his hold on the valuable outposts he had regained. That these tactics were in accordance with the general rules of the art of war, which almost assume that the garrison of a fortress cannot, when once invested, escape unless aided by a relieving army, will be hardly denied by competent critics; and those who have reflected how difficult it would have been, under existing conditions, for the Army of Paris to have forced the German lines without co-operation from without, and, even in the event of a successful attempt, what risks it would have run in that case, will be slow to censure the experienced soldier who did not venture on such an enterprise. Still Trochu may have considered the question from too narrow a point of view, and possibly he

had now an opportunity of severing the circle around Paris even without any external assistance. According to the evidence of eye-witnesses, the whole German force on the French front on the 2nd of December was 25,000 men; this had been reduced at least a fifth; and, though it had retired in good order, the extraordinary losses of its officers induce us to think that it had suffered some abatement from its high martial courage. On the other hand, the French were not less, certainly, than 55,000 strong; these could have been raised to 100,000 by immediate reinforcements from Paris; they were in a highly confident state, and the terrible execution done by the forts had inspired them with exulting hope. It may, be, therefore, had Trochu combined the troops he could have made available for a great effort on the 3rd of December, that he might not improbably have cleared a passage;* and had he done so, and marched boldly on the great German depôt of

* Eye-witnesses writing from the German camp after the war had ended have admitted that this opinion is correct.

Lagny, on the main line of the hostile communications, he might have caused the siege to be raised, and have practically gained a base for his army. Such an attempt certainly would have been perilous, but there were strong arguments, we think, in its favour. The force inside Paris was not a mere garrison; a large and far from despicable army had been formed for active operations; and as Trochu ought to have been aware that, in the actual circumstances of the war, the arrival of a relieving army was an event he could not fully rely on, he ought, perhaps, to have made up his mind to act decisively with the means in his hands; and, had he done so, he certainly had a favourable opportunity at this moment. Had Ney or Hoche been in his place on the 2nd and 3rd of December, the German lines might, we think, have yielded, and possibly at this crisis of the affairs of France an error was made on the side of caution.

Instead, however, of making the effort, the Governor of Paris remained immovable; and

as soon probably as the news reached him of the defeats of the Army of the Loire he made preparations for withdrawing his forces. The column which had advanced to Bonneuil had fallen back some time previously; by the evening of the 4th of December Brie and Champigny were evacuated; and Ducrot's army, recrossing the Marne, took a position in the wood of Vincennes, from which it retired soon afterwards. The attempts, therefore, to relieve Paris and to raise the siege had completely failed; and, without seeking to blame Trochu, we shall only remark that he never found so good an opportunity again, and that possibly genius and daring might at this moment have led to fortune. Outside the capital, the tide of calamity which had overwhelmed the Army of the Loire flowed on, and even enlarged its volume; yet France saw a gleam of light shine at one point over the dark waters. After the capture of Orleans, the Army of the Loire had, as we have seen, been broken up, the right and centre flying beyond the river,

the left clinging to the north bank at Beaugency. Prince Frederic Charles with about 50,000 men hastened to pursue the first of these fragments, which rallied without much loss on Bourges, an unexpected event having prevented the Prince from advancing beyond Vierzon. Von der Tann and the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg meantime, with about 40,000 troops, moved against the isolated French left, but they encountered a resistance which forms a most interesting episode of the war. The French left was composed of two corps, now perhaps about 50,000 strong, and it had been dispirited by recent disasters; but it was commanded by a general who has given proof of no common resource and strength of character. Awaiting his enemy in the difficult country formed by the skirts of the forest of Orleans between Beaugency and Marchenoir, Chanzy, in a series of bloody engagements, repelled all the efforts of the triumphant Germans, and more than once assumed the offensive. It was not until a corps detached by Prince Frederic Charles

threatened his right flank that he made a sign of falling back, and then his retreat was most ably conducted. The strong position of Le Mans offered great advantages to a retiring army; and, if it were once reached, he would effect his junction with the French Army of the West, and be able to obtain large reinforcements. Chanzy, therefore, directed his march thither, making admirable use of many defensive positions, especially of the strong line of the Loir,* turning boldly on his German pursuers, and inflicting on them very great losses; and at last, on the 17th of December, he made good his way to Le Mans, having saved his army and joined his supports. Although his troops had suffered terribly, he had lost only seven or eight guns.

These operations reflect credit from every point of view on the French commander, and prove what a part, at least, of the Army of the Loire could do even in untoward circumstances. Prince Frederic Charles, no

* The affluent of the Loire which runs by Vendome to Angers.

doubt, calculated that Von der Tann and the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg were in sufficient force to destroy Chanzy; but the Frenchman had baffled these expectations, and his vigorous stand at Beaugency and Marchenoir had not only weakened his foes severely, but by drawing a detachment against his right had perhaps saved the rest of the Army of the Loire. Chanzy's strategy, too, in falling back on Le Mans, and retreating upon his reinforcements, when his wing was menaced, shows skill and resolution; and his tactics indicate no ordinary talent. He made excellent use of defensive lines, was singularly dexterous in concealing his movements and covering the march of his retiring columns; and he generally contrived to do as much mischief to his enemy as he suffered himself. Eye-witnesses have told with what foresight he availed himself of natural obstacles to baffle and impede his pursuers; how he disputed villages, hills, and streams, at every stage of his retrograde march, exactly as he ought to have done; nor was he less success-

ful in keeping up the courage and spirits of his troops—that indispensable quality in a commander. It is remarkable that spectators from the German camp, in describing the incidents of this retreat, have recorded that the chassepot proved very destructive, and that the mitrailleuse did great execution—clear proofs that Chanzy knew how to arrange his men in the most favourable manner; and they mention that even the pursuing army felt weary and sick with the constant fighting—proofs of the resistance it had encountered. These facts do real honour to Chanzy, and prove, too, that the Army of the Loire required only a great commander to be capable of considerable efforts. The retreat had been trying in the extreme; yet, though many hundreds had disbanded, the great majority of the French troops had shown courage and perseverance, and, amid the hardships of a winter which had become more than ordinarily severe, had contended, not without honour, against their veteran and well-seasoned foes.

CHAPTER X.

THE defeat of the Army of the Loire and the retirement of Ducrot from across the Marne marked the failure of the first combined attempt on a great scale to raise the siege of Paris. The Germans were on all points triumphant; and yet their able and experienced chiefs did not share in the exultation of the camp. No one knew better than the great strategist who directed the movements of the invading host how perilous is a miscalculation in war; how insecure the German position had been made by "the efforts of Paris and of France, of which they were supposed incapable;" how, notwithstanding the capitulation of Metz, D'Aurelle and Trochu might, not improbably, have

succeeded in effecting their junction, and how success was even yet possible if not prevented by mighty exertions. Victorious, too, as the Germans had been, their losses round Paris, and especially in the protracted struggle with Chanzy's army, had been very severe; and as Paris still held out resolutely, and the winter was extremely rigorous, it was obvious that new and immense demands on the German resources were required. It had become necessary to strengthen considerably the iron circle which opposed a barrier to the armies intended to relieve the capital, to fill up the gaps caused by the prolonged contest, and to increase the efficacy of the means employed to reduce the besieged city. For this purpose vast reinforcements, numbering not less than 200,000 men, were marched into France across the frontier; the shrunken battalions of Prince Frederic Charles and the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg were replenished; the armies of Manteuffel in the north and of Werder in the east were augmented, and the sphere of their operations extended;

the hold on the communications was tightened, and the siege of new fortresses ordered; and every nerve was strained to accelerate the moment when the siege of Paris could be made active, and lessen the difficulties of a mere investment. The attainment, however, of this last object presented grave obstacles. General Trochu, as we have seen, had destroyed the passages on the rivers near Paris; and this impediment, added to those of distance and of worn-out roads, had rendered the transport of a siege train, sufficiently formidable to be of any use, a matter of extraordinary trouble. Though heavy guns and munitions had been moving up during several weeks, the batteries were not yet complete; and, in the meantime, the artillery of the forts and ramparts had been made so powerful that the result of an encounter was felt to be doubtful. Nevertheless, the Germans toiled patiently on, tasking to the utmost the organization for war which they had so thoroughly perfected, their commanders knowing that, even if their siege trains could

not accomplish everything, they would prove important supplementary aids.

These preparations for renewed efforts went on during the month of December. Meanwhile an attempt to relieve Paris from another direction had been tried and had failed. A considerable force had been forming since the beginning of the siege in the northern provinces; but in November the French army of the North had been defeated with much loss, and Manteuffel's divisions had occupied Rouen, had advanced into the heart of Picardy, and at Dieppe had seen the waves of the Channel. The French, however, had been reinforced, and held a strong position on the Somme; they had been placed under an experienced general, who had improved their discipline and drill; and in December, General Faidherbe, the new commander of the Army of the North, was directed to move on Paris if possible, and to co-operate with the beleaguered garrison. Considering that the French army was not more than 60,000 strong, in a great measure

young and raw troops, and that the German foes in their path were probably 50,000 veterans, a move of this kind was not promising; and it does credit to General Faidherbe that, having fought an indecisive action at Pont-à-Noyelles, on a tributary of the Somme, he did not rashly advance further, and retreated into the network of fortresses towards the frontier of Belgium. Nevertheless, Trochu, either not informed in time of this retrograde movement—communications from without to Paris were growing more difficult and uncertain—or, without changing his original plan, believing that some success was possible, resolved once more to make an attack upon the besiegers' lines of investment. On the 21st of December, again heralded by a heavy fire from the adjoining forts, masses of troops poured from the avenues along the northern and eastern parts of the city, the object being apparently to gain a footing upon the great northern road, and to seize and occupy a position in the valley of the Marne and near the Strasburg railway. The

French, at first, were in part successful; and while two columns, under Ducrot, attacked and turned the village of Le Bourget, an important point on the main route to Lille, two more, under Vinoy, stormed Neuilly-sur-Marne, Ville Evrard, and Maison Blanche, outposts fronting the new redoubt at Avron, or near the main line of the German communications. This success, however, was not followed up; the assailants were dislodged from Ville Evrard and Maison Blanche by a surprise by night, and, before long, they returned to their camps, though they continued to threaten on the north-east the investing circle at Drancy and Bondy.

It is not certain whether in these operations Trochu aimed at forcing the German intrenchments, counting on the aid of Faidherbe from without, or whether he wished to gain a point of vantage from which, covered by additional batteries, to advance against the communications of the Germans, and to seize their great depôt on the Strasburg railway; but, in any case, he seems to have expected the guns of a

relieving army. His attack was more like a strong reconnaissance than a resolute effort pushed home, and it bore all the character of a movement dependent on external assistance. Not more than 50,000 men were employed, whereas 150,000 could have been massed together; and we can hardly believe that the severity of the cold—great as it certainly was—was the main cause of the withdrawal of the troops. Here, then, we see again evidence of that adherence to mere general rules and of that want of original genius and daring which, we think, may be traced in Trochu's conduct; and it must be added that, though not his fault, the surprise at Maison Blanche and Ville Evrard was only too characteristic of the neglect of French officers in this unfortunate campaign. As may be supposed, this second failure disheartened greatly the Army of Paris; the soldiers began to lose the confidence they had shown in the battles of the 30th and 2nd, and a nervous apprehension—fatal to courage and to all that constitutes military worth—crept over their minds that

they, too, were destined to a second Metz and Sedan. The spirits of the besiegers had been raised in a corresponding proportion, and as by this time the greater number of their siege guns had been placed in battery, their chiefs resolved to begin an attack on the external defences of the great city. The experience of its destructive powers and its advanced and threatening position made the fort on Avron their first object, and this was to be reduced as quickly as possible. On the 27th of December the attack commenced from batteries erected with skilful secrecy, and arranged to pour in a converging fire; and in a few hours it had become evident that resistance could not be long protracted. Owing to discreditable remissness the work had not been made bomb-proof; although armed with heavy guns it had been armed on one face only, and it was soon enfiladed and silenced. By the morning of the 29th the first outwork of Paris was found by the Germans abandoned—a horrible scene of ruin and slaughter.

This rapid and easily-attained success caused great rejoicing in the German camp, and roused the besiegers to new efforts. An attack on the forts was now decided; and an iron and fiery tempest of shell was rained on Rosny, Noisy, and Nogent, along the north-eastern line of the defences. This soon spread to the southern forts, and Issy, Vanvres, Montrouge and Bicêtre were swept from the neighbouring heights with a fire extending also to Ivry and Charenton. It was, however, one thing to destroy an unfinished and single redoubt, and another to master formidable defences erected with care, supporting each other, and strengthened by every conceivable device; and the artillery of the forts and of the new defences between maintained a not unequal encounter with the besiegers' batteries, which, though they held a dominant position, were not very powerful, and were at a considerable distance. So the first days of the new year passed, the beleaguered city still boldly confronting the foe, though already feeling the approach of a deadlier and irresist-

ible enemy. Meanwhile, immense exertions had been made to swell the numbers of the provincial armies and to try again to raise the siege. An additional corps had been sent to Chanzy, and his junction with the Army of the West, with reinforcements of young troops, had given him a force, perhaps, nominally of 150,000 men, with from three hundred to four hundred guns. The right and centre of the Army of the Loire had also received considerable accessions. It was now stationed at Bourges and Nevers, and under the command of Bourbaki, the late chief of the Imperial Guard, it had been restored to something like order, and was, perhaps, 120,000 strong. Faidherbe's army was recruited, too, and the Army of the East, which, in conjunction with an irregular contingent under Garibaldi, had been up to this time employed in defending Franche Comté against Werder, and in occasionally threatening a secondary line of the German communications with Paris by attacks on Châtillon, Nuits, and Auxerre, was augmented and directed to be held in readi-

ness. Not less probably than 450,000 Frenchmen, with from seven hundred to eight hundred guns, were thus under arms at this moment, exclusive of the garrison and Army of Paris—a marvellous spectacle under the circumstances; but, unfortunately, as Napoleon has observed, there is a wide difference between men and soldiers. The great bulk of these troops were unformed levies; and as the terrible fighting of the last two months had destroyed most of what was best in the force originally under D'Aurelle, it may be affirmed that the real strength of the principal armies in the field—those under Chanzy and Bourbaki—was not equal, even if united, to that of the first Army of the Loire. The organization of the new corps was also in a pitiable state; and there was such a lamentable want of officers, even of those of inferior grade, that their proportion to the men was wholly inadequate. Thus, while the victorious armies of Germany had been largely and formidably strengthened, there had been nothing like a corresponding increase in the forces of France.

In this state of things a plan was formed for a combined movement of the French armies, with a view in the main for the relief of Paris, which must be described as simply desperate under the circumstances. The great and important fortress of Belfort—the key of the centre and south of France—had been invested since the middle of November by some divisions of Werder's army, and Werder himself, as before mentioned, had been operating in Franche Comté. His forces, however, were not considerable, perhaps 40,000 or 50,000 men in the field, and these, occupied in reducing or holding the northern towns of the province, and in guarding the railway lines which from Dijon and Vesoul converge on Paris, were kept, as we have seen, in check by Garibaldi and the French Army of the East, and had even suffered some slight reverses. Bourbaki, however, and his numerous army were in force at Bourges and Nevers—that is, to the west, at no great distance; and an opportunity seemed thus presented to strike a sudden and decisive

blow, which, if successful, would completely change the situation of France in the east, and would probably lead to the relief of Paris. If Bourbaki with 90,000 of his 120,000 troops were to unite with a part of the Army of the East, he might expect by a rapid attack to isolate and overwhelm Werder, and cause the siege of Belfort to be raised; and, if this were done, he could not only master the German communications by Dijon and Vesoul, but a few marches would place him upon the great railway line which from Strasburg to Paris was a mainstay of the besieging army, and essential to its safe existence. A move of this kind, carried out vigorously, would almost inevitably compel the invaders to relax their gripe on the invested capital, and would, perhaps, expose them to defeat and ruin; nor was it necessarily attended with peril to the operations of the French as a whole. It is true that the withdrawal of Bourbaki might subject Chanzy to fight single-handed with Prince Frederic Charles and the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, who

were now extended from Chartres to Orleans, with detachments pointing towards Le Mans; but Chanzy, having been largely reinforced, could, it might be expected, hold his own; nor was it likely that a combined movement of this kind would be made against him. On the contrary, it was reasonable to suppose that, when informed of Bourbaki's march, Prince Frederic Charles would detach against him the whole or a large part of his troops, or would pause, hesitate, and delay at Orleans; and in either of these cases Chanzy would be safe, nay, would be able by a bold advance to defeat the enemies in his front in detail, and so open a way to Paris. Nor if, as was to be expected, Prince Frederic Charles followed Bourbaki, would this mar that general's operations, for he would have an immense start over the German commander; and a French corps could be left in his rear to observe and retard the Prince's movements.

Such was the scheme for the last effort of the provincial armies in behalf of Paris.

General Trochu is not responsible for it; it was the idea of an obscure staff-officer which caught the imagination of M. Gambetta, and we doubt whether it was communicated to Chanzy. It is unfair to judge of strategy by the event, but, considering the relative strength of the belligerents, we can only describe the project as desperate. No doubt the communications of the Germans were the most vulnerable point in their armour, and the seizing of them, even at this time, might have led to the raising of the siege of Paris; and the intended operation might be excused if the ability of Bourbaki had been proved, if he had had a trained and well-organized army of 150,000 men, and if, moreover, the forces of Chanzy were certainly sufficient to cope successfully with Prince Frederic Charles and the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, on the supposition that they would act together. Even on these hypotheses the plan was open to serious objections; and in any case it would have been more prudent to attack the communications of the Germans at

points considerably nearer Paris than a few marches to the west of Belfort, in which case Bourbaki would have marched from Bourges and Nevers on Troyes and Châlons, detaching against Prince Frederic Charles a force sufficient to keep him in check, and thus allowing Chanzy to assail the Grand Duke and advance on Paris. But in the actual state of the contending armies the whole project was, we think, insensate. Bourbaki was not a tried commander; his army, even if reinforced to 150,000 men and more, was known to be raw and ill provided; and as its movements would be conducted in an exceedingly intricate and mountainous country, in the depths of a severe winter, it was by no means certain that it would overpower Werder and accomplish the raising of the siege of Belfort, and far from probable that it could master, at least for a sufficiently long time, the great line of the German communications, already not left without protection, and which reinforcements could easily reach. Success, therefore, was far from assured, even

where it appeared most promising; and even success, unless extraordinary, would leave the forces of France exposed, on the rest of the theatre, to defeat and disaster. The march of Bourbaki from Bourges and Nevers would obviously set Prince Frederic Charles free to move against and attack Chanzy in conjunction with the Grand Duke; and if so, how could the French general, with a bad and unorganized army, contend against masses of veteran troops known to be nearly equal in numbers, and capable, too, of receiving additions? As for the notion that Prince Frederic Charles would follow Bourbaki and leave Chanzy to deal separately with the Grand Duke, it was not to be taken for granted; and it was simply childish to imagine that the Prince, a really great commander, would halt, irresolute where to strike, and would allow his enemies to elude him. Thus, while the operations of Bourbaki were not of the most promising kind, they would expose Chanzy to defeat and ruin; and the failure of Bourbaki would not only mar the

prospect of raising the siege of Paris, but might bring down disaster on his own army.

This project in truth, considered properly, was simply a series of eccentric movements, to be executed by wholly inadequate forces, against an enemy vastly superior and in a formidable central position; and those who have admired it keep out of sight the cardinal and decisive fact of the immense disparity between the antagonist armies. We incline to think that at this conjuncture it had become impossible to relieve Paris; the German commanders had had time to rectify the miscalculation they had made, and the barrier of the covering armies, which, in consequence of the active state of the siege, could now be reinforced from within, had become too formidable to be broken. Nevertheless, one chance may have remained; and if it had been seized by the French generals they would at least have averted a frightful catastrophe. Had Bourbaki, instead of going off to the east, attacked vigorously Prince Frederic Charles, he would certainly have detained a

very large part of the Prince's forces; in that event, although probably the operation would not have succeeded, Chanzy might have defeated the Grand Duke and any other divisions in his front, and, at least, have endeavoured to reach Paris; and in any case the French armies would have had their lines of retreat open, and would have followed the rules of prudent strategy. The contrary course was, however, followed; and in the last days of December, Bourbaki, leaving one corps under Le Comte at Bourges, to observe the movements of Prince Frederic Charles, set off with three corps from his head-quarters to effect his junction with the Army of the East, a portion of which was to co-operate with him. The march of the French was slow and painful; the troops, ill-clad, ill-fed, and ill-officered, falling off in hundreds from the disordered columns; and several days elapsed before the army, already in a disorganized state, had disappeared behind the mountain range between the valleys of the Loire and the Saone. What followed was what was to

have been expected by those familiar with the German strategy. Prince Frederic Charles, as soon as he had been assured that the enemy who at Bourges and Nevers had compelled him to remain in force at Orleans had gone away to another theatre, made preparations, without the delay of an instant, to turn upon his nearest antagonist, and, if possible, to overwhelm Chanzy. For this purpose the Prince directed a general movement against Le Mans, to be executed by the whole of his troops in concert with those of the Grand Duke; and as he had three well-recruited corps, with more than three hundred guns, and the Grand Duke had, perhaps, 60,000 men, with, probably, detachments from the besiegers' lines, it might be assumed that this splendid force would suffice to crush a French army composed chiefly of raw levies, and hardly, if at all, superior in numbers. By the first days of January the broad German line, extending from Chartres to Beaugency, was in full march on the positions of its foe.

The operations that ensued deserve the

attention of the military student, because they show how judgment and skill may fail to render a bad army the match of a well-organized force, the numbers being tolerably equal; and how generalship which, in other circumstances, would be, in a high degree, rash, may secure victory under such conditions. On the 6th of January Chanzy attacked a single corps of Prince Frederic Charles, which had advanced as far as Vendome, but finding the enemy pressing on him, he fell back in good order on Le Mans, the central position of all his forces. The Prince pursued in two columns; one advancing against the Frenchman's front, by St. Calais and Bouloire, the other seeking to turn his right wing by La Chartre and Ecommoy; while at the same time the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, marching forward in a parallel line, but at a great distance, and united only with his colleague by a weak cordon of troops, pushed on by Nogent and even Bellesme, to encompass and close on the French left, and thus to surround the whole

of their army. The experience of many illustrious fields has proved what, in operations like this, can be done by a great commander with troops on whom he can rely, and, no doubt, the Germans would not have ventured to operate in this way against a good army; but, in the actual condition of their foes, they knew well that movements of this kind are exactly such as baffle bad soldiers, and render victory almost certain. Chanzy felt himself unequal to attack; though, possibly, in a similar situation Napoleon would have made the attempt; and though his retreat was very well conducted, his young troops, continually pressed by an enemy ever upon their flanks, and suffering terribly from forced marches, bad equipments, and the intense cold, began to lose all hope and confidence, to become demoralized, and to disband in thousands. A series of indecisive engagements occurred, in which the failing power of the French army was attested by masses of unwounded prisoners, who surrendered without an attempt to resist; and Chanzy fell back

from point to point until at last he reached the positions which he had selected beforehand for a resolute stand. These positions formed a double set of lines, the second, on the right bank of the Huisne, a considerable affluent of the Sarthe, most formidable in its natural strength; and here, protected by woods and hills, and covered by masses of artillery, Chanzy tried to baffle and throw back his pursuers. The Germans attacked with almost reckless confidence; for some divisions of the Grand Duke were not up at the appointed time, and a single corps of Prince Frederic Charles was launched against 50,000 Frenchmen, intrenched and supported by numerous guns—a movement brilliant, perhaps, but to be explained only by the contempt the assailants felt for their enemy. During the 10th and the greater part of the 11th Chanzy managed to make good his defences; but his right flank was at last turned by one of the corps of Prince Frederic Charles, which fell towards nightfall on the French troops. The whole French army broke

up, Le Mans was evacuated on the 12th, and the capture of 20,000 prisoners proves how signal had been the disaster. Nevertheless, Chanzy showed ability in drawing together his discomfited forces, he lost only twelve field-guns, and Prince Frederic Charles, whose movements indicate that he had contemplated a second Sedan, found that his foe had escaped his toils.

In these operations of the French commander there is little, we think, to censure. The General of Arcola and Lodi might possibly have seized one or two occasions on which an attack would have been successful, but even this is extremely doubtful; and Chanzy displayed great forethought and skill in choosing his positions at Le Mans. The movements of his foes were terribly effective, but they cannot be cited as military precedents; and the Grand Duke especially displayed less than the wonted circumspection of the German commanders. In fact, however, the Germans felt that they could do nearly as they liked; and as their united forces must

have almost equalled those of Chanzy in numbers, the result could never have been doubtful. Meanwhile, on another part of the theatre, the reckless strategy of the French was bringing on new and greater disasters. Towards the end of the first week of January Bourbaki had effected his junction with the divisions of the Army of the East which had been told off to co-operate with him; and with a force nominally of 135,000 men, with from three hundred to four hundred guns, he began traversing the hilly country of Central Franche Comté on his way to Belfort. What followed ought to be carefully studied, for it reveals fearfully the concurrence of causes which contributed to the misfortunes of France. The staff officer who had devised the project to which we have before referred had been offered the command to carry it out; but he had declined, "because he would not serve under a revolutionary government." The choice, therefore, of M. Gambetta unfortunately fell on Bourbaki, and that general did not thoroughly apprehend the plan he

was commissioned to undertake. The staff officer, rightly appreciating the necessity of rapidity of movement and of securing good lines of retreat, had proposed that the French army should advance in four or five columns at least, and should especially hold in force the passages along the Swiss frontier; and for this purpose he had insisted that the march to Belfort should be made by a number of converging routes, and that the roads by Montbeliard and Pontarlier should be occupied by several divisions. Instead of this, Bourbaki chose to move with the great mass of his men in a single column through the rugged defiles in the valley between the Ognon and the Doubs, throwing out very feeble wings only; and the result was, of course, to retard his progress and to confine him almost to one line of operations. His weak, unwieldy, and harassed army reached Villersexel on the 6th of January, and here encountered the vanguard of Werder, who had had full time to mature his arrangements; and it was not until the 14th that it approached the line of

the Lisaine, a tributary of the Doubs in front of Belfort, having made only four or five miles a day, at a crisis when expedition was everything. This march has been described as "heart-rending," the troops half famished for want of food, without shoes, and starved by the cold, the few staff officers "knowing nothing," and continually giving wrong orders, and the artillery and trains in "hopeless confusion." Bourbaki now deployed his army along an extensive line from Chennebriers, by Héricourt, to Montbeliard; but his wings remained extraordinarily weak, and his chief efforts were made with his centre. Werder had entrenched himself carefully in formidable positions, armed with heavy guns; and in a series of engagements which lasted three days he baffled all the attacks of the French with not more than 40,000 men. On the 16th, however, the French left had carried Chennebriers beyond Werder's right; and it has been said that a bold flank movement would have enabled the assailants to reach Belfort. But by this time Bourbaki had

become as "demoralized as his wretched army." He saw Prince Charles in imagination in his rear, a terrible apparition from the north was approaching, and he drew off from Héricourt on the 18th, having failed to attain his first object, much less to reach the German communications. The luckless commander retreated by the narrow valley by which he had advanced; and it was not until the 22nd that his army, a beaten and disbanded mass, found a temporary shelter under the guns of Besançon.

Meantime an overwhelming blow, directed with consummate ability, had been aimed against the French leader. Von Moltke seems from the first moment to have divined Bourbaki's mission; and he applied himself to baffle his antagonist, and, if fortune favoured, to defeat and crush him. The stage which the siege of Paris had reached had enabled the great strategist to detach, without fear, from the investing army, and a whole corps was directed from Paris to observe from Troyes and Chatillon-sur-Seine

the operations of Bourbaki's army. This corps, supported by some divisions from Metz and the German Army of the North, was placed under the command of Manteuffel, and, as soon as Bourbaki had become engaged decisively in this march to Belfort, it was ordered to push forward rapidly, and fall on the flank and rear of the French commander. The Germans, not more than 50,000 strong, but well provided, in perfect order, and in the highest state of efficiency for war, poured fiercely over the mountain range which leads from Champagne into Franche Comté, and, disregarding all obstacles in their way, were soon closing in upon their enemy. Manteuffel reached Gray on the 18th of January, and having sent off a few troops to hold Garibaldi at Dijon in check, he pressed forward with the bulk of his army to cut off Bourbaki's retreat, Werder moving against the Frenchman in front. Dôle was reached by the Germans on the 24th, and crossing the Doubs they marched quickly to seize the defiles along the Swiss frontier, and thus hem in

their intended victim. Bourbaki, who, during these decisive moves, had been halting irresolutely at Besançon, lost altogether his self-command, and gave a reckless order for a retreat southwards, his only chances, perhaps, being either to remain where he was, in the hope that the enemy would be compelled to retire from want of supplies, or to endeavour to slip round Manteuffel's flank, and make his way to Garibaldi at Dijon. The unhappy man, when he found that the Germans were on his rear, madly shot himself, and his ruined army rushed forth from Besançon almost literally without a commander. The horrors of that flight were like those from Moscow; cold, hunger, and terror soon broke up the mass into a horde of fugitives; and at last, when it had been discovered that the Germans occupied the whole country between the Doubs and Pontarlier, the relics of what had once been an army of 135,000 men retreated across the Swiss frontier, where they were obliged to lay down their arms.

The catastrophe of Bourbaki's army was the Sedan of the war in its second phase. In a purely military point of view it was as heavy a blow as the fall of Paris, for it deprived France of the only force available to defend the east and centre. Though not necessarily the result of the false strategy we have described, it must, in some measure, be ascribed to it; though beyond question the main causes were the disorganized state of Bourbaki's troops, the utter incapacity of that general, and the great ability with which Manteuffel was directed against his French antagonist. If Von Moltke had never done anything else, this single operation would mark him out as one of the master spirits of war; nor less admirable were the precision, the intelligence, and the decisive speed with which the Germans went down on their foe. Here, indeed, we see in its highest illustration the difference between a real army, well equipped, and commanded as it ought to be, and a raw, weak force, ill found in everything, and led to ruin by a worthless general.

Meanwhile, during this brief campaign the waves of misfortune had been breaking heavily over France in other directions. One by one the fortresses on her north-eastern frontier were falling before her victorious foe, the antiquated defences of Vauban's time being unable to withstand even a light bombardment from field guns of the present day. Besides the strong places on the Meuse and the Aisne reduced to open the German communications, Péronne, Rocroi, and Givet had surrendered, and her enemies had turned and destroyed from within the barrier which her illustrious engineer had formed to repel an attack from Belgium. In an attempt to stem the flood of invasion, or possibly to co-operate in relieving Paris, the French Army of the North had fought two battles, which, though different in their results, do not require particular notice. Early in January Faidherbe defeated a part of the German Army of the North; but he did not follow up his success at Bapaume, and was too weak for any serious movement. A few days after-

wards, Von Goeben, who, in the absence of Manteuffel commanded the Germans in the north, had an opportunity of taking his revenge, and inflicted a heavy blow on his enemy. Reinforced by a considerable detachment from the investing circle around Paris, he attacked Faidherbe at St. Quentin, and routed him completely, his young troops running away in thousands. These operations, however, had but little effect on the final issue of the mighty conflict.

By this time all hope of raising the siege of the capital had disappeared. The disaster ot Chanzy at Le Mans, and the ruin which had overtaken Bqurbaki, closed the efforts of the provincial armies, and struck the sword out of the hand of France. Yet still Paris showed an undaunted front, and, isolated in the midst of the overwhelming invasion, thought of nothing but resistance to the last. The fire on the forts had continued some weeks, but without doing any serious damage, and before long the besiegers' shells were crashing into the streets of the city, and

carrying havoc into its crowded dwellings. The bombardment, however, was only partial, and reached only to the left bank of the Seine; and we incline to think that it was attempted chiefly to enable the Germans with greater ease to make detachments from the investing circle. As may be supposed, a demonstration like this proved fruitless in the case of a population which had shown such fortitude and self-command; it has been asserted that it merely nerved the citizens to a sterner mood; and certainly Paris formed no exception to what history has often recorded, that a bombardment, despite its seeming terrors, has little effect even on non-combatants. Meanwhile, however, the cruel enemy, to which heroism itself must yield, had been making his silent approach, and the capital was within the grasp of famine. On the 19th of January a final effort was made to break through the besiegers' lines; and, on this occasion, Trochu, no doubt, did not wait for a relieving army. The attack, however for some cause which hitherto has not been

explained, was made with 100,000 men only whereas many more could have been spared, and it was conducted without skill or vigour, the right wing of the French army having been several hours too late, and the left and centre being ill-supported. It is probable, however, that no tactics would have materially affected the result; for though the assailants made good a part of the way by Garches and Montretout to Versailles, their columns were swept by a withering fire when they came within reach of the German entrenchments. In fact efforts of this kind, always very hazardous in their results, were by this time altogether too late. The German lines were of irresistible strength, and the French, disheartened by repeated failures, did not fight with real hope or confidence. Yet noble examples of individual courage were given upon that disastrous day; and the sacrifice of nearly 10,000 victims, at least, proves that the French troops were not wanting in patriotic devotion. It was now the 120th day of the siege, and for many weeks the city

had been a scene of deep and increasing suffering. Horseflesh had long been the only animal food; the death rate had increased fourfold; the scanty supply of what was called bread had almost ceased to be made of corn; and ravaged, harried, and tortured by cold, the great city trembled on the verge of starvation. On the 28th of January, 1871, long after the defeat of the provincial armies, Paris was compelled to succumb to famine; and the agony of the gigantic conflict, which had been desolating France for months, ceased with the last struggles of the capital. At the time of the capitulation not a fort had fallen; the ramparts were almost intact; not a parallel had been opened, or an approach made; and the siege might have been protracted for months had food existed in sufficient quantities.

CHAPTER XI.

THE fall of Belfort, after a protracted defence, was the last incident of this part of the campaign, though the tricolour still floated from the rock of Bitsche, a monument of unflinching endurance. A few reflections seem to be required before we bring our comments to a close. Had Masséna carried the lines of Torres Vedras, the fortunes of the war in the Peninsula might have been changed; and, but for the unexpected burning of Moscow, the enterprise of 1812 would not improbably have been considered the most dazzling of military achievements. Yet Napoleon has shown in the clearest manner that in advancing hastily on the Lines, without covering his rear at Coimbra, and leaving an enemy

behind at Oporto, Masséna "violated most important rules;" and Wellington has demonstrated that the march from Smolensko cannot be justified even on the assumption that the Grand Army would winter in Moscow. Nor will success blind the real student of the art of war to the risks of the Germans during the siege of Paris, nor conceal the results of their miscalculations as to the resisting powers of France and the capital. On the supposition that the city would fall quickly, their march to Paris may well be vindicated, though even in that case their advance into France, without having mastered one line of railway, or having captured an important fortress, and while Bazaine still held out at Metz, partakes more of daring than of prudence. But when Paris persistently held out, and, in fact, had become a colossal fortress, defended by an enormous garrison, and when, moreover, France had developed a force and energy they did not anticipate, their situation was beset with dangers for a time. Detained in the depths of an enemy's country, without ready access

to a distant frontier, and spread in thin lines around a hostile capital, without a sufficient covering army, they remained for weeks liable to serious attacks; and though these attacks were not successful, the chances in their favour were not a few; and the result might have been very disastrous. In fact, after making every allowance for the composition of the Army of the Loire, D'Aurelle probably had the means of reaching Paris after the 10th of November. In that event he would have raised the siege; and though the prospect was then less hopeful, France might reasonably have expected victory in the contests near Orleans, and outside Paris, from the 28th of November to the 3rd of December. The result is that, for more than two months after the investment of Paris had begun, we seek in vain in the operations of the Germans for those perfect illustrations of military skill of which they have given so many examples; their strategy suffers from their miscalculation; and their movements display hesitation, and were sometimes not

maintained by adequate force. A mere accident saved Von der Tann from being destroyed on the 9th of November; the chance of the fall of Metz at the right moment alone enabled Prince Frederic Charles to be on the Loire in sufficient time to paralyze and afterwards to stop D'Aurelle; even as it was, D'Aurelle failed in the main through his inferior generalship; and that the issue of a campaign should have been hazarded on chances like these is not entitled to admiration. Moreover, as we have endeavoured to show, Trochu probably had, on the 2nd of December, an opportunity of carrying the besiegers' lines, and indeed, perhaps, more than one opportunity; and yet the besiegers were not able to oppose anything like a sufficient force to what might have been collected by the French general.

The truth, therefore, seems clearly to be that the German commanders marched to Paris believing that the city would fall at once; that, when this event did not happen, they inevitably suffered from the results of

projects founded on a false hypothesis; and consequently, that they were exposed to peril, and their operations were imperfect, until time and additions to their strength enabled them to set right their original error. When this, however, has been said, it must be added that, even from the first, the German operations deserve in parts high commendation from the military critic; and when his position was once made secure, the genius and capacity of Von Moltke blaze out again in conspicuous lustre. The mere investment of the huge city was a task of an extraordinary kind; nothing could have been better than the manner in which the lines were designed and fortified; and though we see evidences of want of power to the last moment in the active siege, it enabled the Germans to detach considerable forces against the relieving armies. Moreover, the besiegers applied themselves with true forethought, even from the first, to enlarging their communications and gathering in supplies, even though a long siege was not expected—precautions which

stood them in good stead; and the mode by which they contrived to support their immense army around Paris during more than four months, and in the depths of winter, is a marvel of military administration. On this point it is enough to say that the designers of the fortifications of Paris assumed that no enemy could subsist outside the walls for more than sixty days, whereas the Germans remained more than twice that time; and though, of course, the invention of railways gave them great advantages in this respect, it does not account for this enormous difference. We have already spoken of the admirable skill with which Prince Frederic Charles repulsed what might have been a very formidable attack by D'Aurelle in the last days of November, and converted danger into a series of triumphs; suffice it to say, that at this juncture he upheld worthily Germany's fortunes. And when the illustrious German strategist had once drawn together sufficient forces, and felt himself secure a round Paris—what energy, what bril-

liancy, what astonishing power, we see in his grand and decisive operations! With what accuracy of calculation he controlled and directed the double circle he had thrown round the beleaguered city, now launching the covering armies against their assailants and scattering them in defeat, now detaching from the investing line forces to strengthen the line outside, at all times ruling the complicated course of the war with the hand of a real master. As for the generalship by which Bourbaki was destroyed, it does not require any comment; it will always stand out in military history like the celebrated marches to Ulm and Marengo, like Von Moltke's own moves to Metz and Sedan. Nor, in considering these great efforts, is less praise due to the German armies, to the training and discipline which have made them the most perfect of military instruments, to the organization which enables them to accomplish all that their chiefs require, to the intelligence which pervades their ranks, and to their martial courage. It is this com-

bination of genius in command and military strength on a colossal scale which has made Germany irresistible in this campaign.

From the conquerors we turn to glance at the plans and efforts of the French commanders. Considered as a scheme for the defence of France, we are disposed to think that General Trochu's project was defective in its original conception. The idea of making the French capital the main centre of national resistance, of filling it with a prodigious garrison, to furnish ultimately an army capable of joining in an active defence, and of creating provincial armies for the purpose mainly of raising the siege, appears to us, in the peculiar circumstances of France after the battle of Sedan, to have been founded on too large assumptions, and in any case it, we think, sacrificed the primary to a secondary object. It is quite true that it was no chimera, and it was more nearly realised in success than has been generally supposed or imagined. But was it not very doubtful beforehand whether the armed multitude shut up in Paris

would ever become a trained force, which could seriously attack the Germans, or that the provincial armies, which, from the nature of the case, would necessarily be of an inferior kind, would be ever able to reach the capital? If so, was it not probable that Paris would in the long run fall; that, crowded as it was with masses of men not needed for a passive defence, its fall would occasion extraordinary loss; and, above all, that the provincial armies might suffer cruelly in the attempt to make good their way to the beleaguered city? And if so, would not the capitulation find France in a completely exhausted state? And did not, therefore, the whole scheme imperil France in a very uncertain chance, and sacrifice her to the hope of rescuing Paris? These considerations induce us to think that Trochu ought to have acted differently. He ought to have looked at France as the first object, and Paris as subordinate only; and considering the actual position of affairs, he would have done better, in our judgment, had he regarded Paris as simply a

fortress, placed in it only enough men to insure its holding out to the last, and to make the defences as strong as possible. Had he steadily devoted the breathing space, which in that event he would have had, to organizing into real armies—collected on certain strategic points and secured from the possible reach of the enemy—the masses of levies he could have raised, and destined these to defending the country when the real stress of the invasion came, and not to attempts to relieve Paris; had he taken this course, Paris would have fulfilled what evidently in Napoleon's opinion was its real and legitimate mission; it would have gained France time to renew her strength; it would have fallen, but with a garrison only, and upon its fall, half a million of troops in a state of fair efficiency for the field, and with no inconsiderable reserves behind, would have confronted the German armies, and at least have greatly prolonged the contest. This plainly is what Napoleon contemplated when he maintained that after extraordinary disasters France

should be defended behind the Loire with fortified Paris as an outwork; and the prescience of the great master was fully illustrated in this campaign, for, notwithstanding their unparalleled success, the Germans, as long as Paris held out, were only just able to cross the Loire.

Except, however, in a very general way, Trochu is not responsible for the operations of any of the armies outside Paris. It is hardly yet time to form a judgment on his conduct in the defence of the city, yet some conclusions seem tolerably certain. While he staked the safety of France on the defence of Paris, he defended Paris as a fortress only; and, as we have seen, he made the efforts of the army he created inside the walls dependent on those of the provincial armies, and did not seriously endeavour to break out until it was too late—on the 19th of January. That in acting thus he adhered steadily to the general rules of the art of war, will not be denied by competent critics. It is easy for those who, as Jomini says, see in strategy a thing of diagrams on a

map, to insist that Trochu, "with his half million of men," and with "all the advantage of interior lines," ought to have massed a huge force at "some decisive point," and to have broken through the investing circle; and to infer, too, because he did not do this, that "it was the fault of the worthless French soldier." This kind of reasoning forgets, in the first place, that probably half of Trochu's troops were required to man the forts and the ramparts; and, in the second place, it wholly ignores the essential elements of the problem. Every large capital, and especially Paris, has a great number of lateral roads connecting the principal avenues from it; and, besides, in its suburbs and outskirts it contains a regular zone of defensible positions. A besieging army has, therefore, the means of not only investing the place, but of communicating more or less easily along the whole circumference it holds; and it can so fortify the lines it constructs as to make them in the highest degree formidable. On the other hand, a besieged army endeavouring to force

its way out has few roads, comparatively, to choose; it finds great difficulty in making use of its strength and in deploying anywhere on a broad front; and when its columns approach the besiegers' intrenchments they are certain to meet such a mass of obstacles, and to be swept by so destructive a fire, that sometimes even the numbers of the men prove a hindrance rather than an advantage, and that success, at the best, is extremely doubtful. It follows that for the army in Paris to burst through the iron German circle was a task of the most serious kind; and though we think it was not impossible, it was, to say the least, very hazardous. Besides, if an army is not to perish, it must carry with it the means of subsistence, and all kinds of impediments and munitions, and hence we see how critical would be the situation of the army in Paris, even if it should storm the German entrenchments, unless its success was so decisive that it could take out with it the immense material required for about 100,000 men, or unless it could certainly have found and maintained a

new base just outside the city. On the other hand, the arrival of a relieving army would at once cause the whole scene to change; the Germans, liable to be placed within two fires would have been compelled to raise the siege, either altogether or for some time; their formidable lines would be abandoned; and, without any extreme danger, the two French armies would either join hands or the Army of Paris would at least get out.

These considerations ought to prevent any one from passing a sweeping censure on Trochu for having subordinated the operations of his own to those of a relieving army. Nevertheless, as we have already said, remembering the immense force which he had in his hands inside Paris, the vast extent of the German lines, and how doubtful it was, as affairs then stood, that a relieving army would make its appearance, it may be that he ought to have made the breaking out by unaided efforts a paramount object of the defence, and that he ought to have deviated in this instance from ordinary and well-known strategic rules.

And it appears probable that he had at least one good chance, when, on the 2nd and 3rd of December, the Germans, literally torn to pieces by the shells from the eastern forts and batteries, were exceedingly weak along his front, and had he succeeded, and, as we have intimated, seized the main German depôt at Lagny, he would have been able to feed his army, and perhaps even to have raised the siege.* As regards his conduct as a general in chief, it appears certain that his last great attempt on the 19th of January was ill-managed; the army was for many hours in the cold of a cruel winter night without food; the whole right wing was not up in time, and the left and centre were much thwarted; though we do not believe that, in any case, the final result would have been different. We must also express our surprise if, as seems to be tolerably certain, Trochu had nearly half a million of men under arms inside the walls of the city, that the army intended for

* This opinion has since been confirmed by the statements of eye-witnesses from the German camp.

active operations seems not to have exceeded 150,000 men. Allowing that 250,000 were needed for guarding the defences, 250,000 troops ought to have been available against the besiegers; yet, possibly, the reason of this apparent remissness was that modern small arms did not exist in sufficient quantities inside Paris. Trochu has, moreover, been severely condemned for not having accomplished more in extending and weakening the besiegers' lines, by constructing more numerous counter approaches; and it has been said that by this means alone he could have compelled the raising of the siege. We think he certainly is to be blamed for the imperfect fortifying of Mont Avron; but, before we censure him on the other charge, it is necessary to know what his resources were in guns, powder, and other appliances. It would seem that, although Trochu trained and disciplined his troops well, he did not inspire them with that perfect confidence which is one of the gifts of a great commander; the instincts of the soldier always pointed to Vinoy as the

chief he preferred. On the whole, it may be near the truth to say that, though Trochu's defence was most honourable to him, he did not display fertility of invention, or genius and energy of the highest order. It is certain, however, that he is entitled to very great praise for having formed an army out of a mere multitude, for having powerfully strengthened the defences, and, above all, for having gained complete ascendency over the city, though in all these respects he was nobly seconded by zeal, patriotism, ingenuity, and devotion.

As regards the conduct of the other French commanders, we have already dwelt enough upon it. We are disposed to think very highly of Chanzy; he seems to us the most capable chief produced by France in this calamitous war. Faidherbe, too, showed unquestionable talent in his manœuvring among the fortresses of the North, though more than once he betrayed the timidity occasioned by repeated misfortunes. We have fully noticed the combination of theoretic

knowledge and feebleness of execution conspicuous in the operations of D'Aurelle; and as for the unhappy Bourbaki, making every allowance for the quality of his troops, he simply led his army to ruin. The want of a leading master mind is but too evident in the French movements; and Von Moltke in the Army of France found no antagonist worthy of him.* In justice, however, to the French generals, especially to the skilful and prudent Chanzy, it is ever necessary to bear in mind how miserably inferior as instruments of war were their raw armies to those of the Germans. It is not too much to say that during this part of the campaign a French force, to have had a good chance of success, ought to have been numerically superior in the proportion of two to one, and the reason is sufficiently

* In what degree M. Gambetta directed the general operations of the French armies is as yet unknown. It is probable that he interfered a good deal. It has been said of him bitterly that, unlike Carnot, he "organised not victory but defeat." Yet, in justice to this remarkable man, it must be said that Carnot's ambitious strategy was essentially unsound, as Napoleon has clearly shown, and Carnot had no Von Moltke to deal with.

obvious. The power of an army lies mainly in its moral strength and its mechanical appliances*—the first the fruit of training, discipline, intelligence, and common service in the field, the second the result of organization; and as the German armies enjoyed these advantages in the highest degree, and the new French armies were without them, or possessed them in a very imperfect manner, nothing but a great disparity of numbers could possibly have redressed the balance, especially when the ascendency of success was wholly on the German side.* Nevertheless, the first Army of the Loire was by no means a despicable force; and, as we have pointed out, there were occasions when a great general would, in our judgment, have accomplished memorable things with it. How often did troops of very inferior quality

* "Three things," says Marmont (Esprit des Institutions Militaires, p. 216), "are needful to give an army strength, the habit of orderly conduct, obedience and discipline, and confidence in itself and its chiefs. Without these moral elements it is a mere mass of men." These pregnant words ought to be borne in mind by those who shall reorganise the military power of France.

triumph in 1813 and 1814 under the inspiration of the First Napoleon? And what at the beginning of the campaign of 1796—still, perhaps, unequalled in military history—were the warriors of Mottenotte and Lodi? Nor is there any reason to suppose that the difference between a raw and a veteran army is increased by modern inventions. On the contrary, at least in defensive operations, there is some evidence that it may have diminished.*

In closing these remarks we think it right to say a few words on a painful subject. The concurrent testimony of all observers is that at the opening of the campaign the conduct of the German troops was excellent; they were not more remarkable for courage and discipline than for honourable treatment of the invaded country. The picture has been fearfully darkened; complaints have been made that the German leaders have acted like Tilly and Wallenstein; and dreadful

* See on this point the Letters of "The Times" Correspondent describing Chanzy's retreat from Orleans to Le Mans. Modern small-arms greatly favour the defence.

stories are told of murdered free-shooters, of villages burnt by way of reprisals, of barbarous executions, of innocent citizens made hostages, of devastation carried out on system as if by the savage hordes of Attila. Indignation, too, has been loudly expressed that Paris has been subjected to bombardment; that fire and shell should have searched and ravaged its historic streets and fine public buildings. According to the remark of the old Greek, that human nature in the same circumstances is usually pretty nearly the same, we can reasonably account for these things, without imputing any peculiar guilt, or even ferocity, to the German armies. In the first place—and this unhappily is attested throughout the history of our race—prolonged war makes men relentless and indifferent to the sight of suffering; the soldier who knows he may die to-morrow becomes reckless of the miseries of others; and we cannot doubt that a change like this passed over the character of the invaders of France as the contest went on and grew in intensity. And, in the second

place, the system of requisitions pursued by the German commanders—a system, it must be said with regret, perhaps necessary in a campaign conducted on such an enormous scale—invariably has been attended with the consequences before mentioned. Forced contributions generate resistance among the non-combatant population; this leads to a guerilla warfare; and this compels the generals of the invading army to exercise severities of all kinds, unhappily often with no discriminating hand, for no officer will ever allow his men to be destroyed or cut off, and perhaps his army to be put in danger, by bands of irregular armed peasants. This was seen repeatedly in the wars of Napoleon, and was one of the chief causes of their terrible character. Napoleon was far too great a man to have been cruel for cruelty's sake, and we now behold the same thing in a generation which had forgotten such scenes. The real moral to be deduced is, not that this or that army is better or worse than another; but that war carried on to a certain stage and

under the conditions referred to becomes necessarily a fearful scourge. As for the bombardment of Paris, it was a failure considered merely as it affected the siege, and from that point of view may be deprecated as an act of simply useless severity; but if, as seems certain, it enabled the Germans to set free troops from the investing circle, it was justifiable in the strictest sense.

"France has often deceived and astonished the world, but fortune has decided against her, and we do not think she will reverse the decision." These words were written when, after Sedan, France had roused herself to a national resistance; and it will be allowed they have been verified. That a people whose whole regular forces had been suddenly swept away should, almost without a recognized government, have carried on a contest for months against a gigantic military power, wielding enormous armies in the most perfect order, and directed by consummate ability; that it should have succeeded in placing under arms from 800,000 to 900,000

men in a space so short as to seem hardly credible; that its efforts, seconded by the defence of Paris, should have made the issue seem long uncertain; that possibly nothing but a great commander—that rare specimen of human genius—was required to turn the scale of fortune; this was a grand and wonderful spectacle; and when the din of the strife has passed away, and when events are seen as they are, divested of the false hues of success, history will relate that in her death struggle France was true to herself and her heroic annals. Nor did she, as is supposed, fall short of the valour and patriotism of 1793; for those who have studied that period, not from the rhapsodies of gaudy writers,* but in the records of contemporary actors, know that the levies of Custine and Dumouriez

* On this point the testimony of Napoleon is conclusive and interesting. "It was neither," he said, "the volunteers nor the recruits who saved the Republic; it was 180,000 old troops of the Monarchy, and the discharged veterans whom the Revolution impelled to the frontiers. Part of the recruits deserted, part died, a small portion only remained, who in process of time became good soldiers. You will not soon find me going to war with an army of recruits."

conducted themselves in the same way as their successors in 1870–1, until decided success was gained through the feeble impotence of the Coalition, not to dwell on the fact that, at the first period, they were leavened by many more good soldiers. That France failed in the later contest is due simply to the obvious difference in the conditions under which it was waged, and Frenchmen may not unjustly be assured that they have not degenerated from their forefathers.* Would we could add that, in the hour of national humiliation and sorrow, they had shown themselves as patriotic in endeavouring to heal the wounds of the State, as united in affliction and as free from faction, as worthy of political liberty, as they had given proof of an enthusiastic love of their country!

We close these remarks at the darkest period which France has known in her chequered annals. It is not merely that she

* These concluding remarks were written before the revolution of the Commune had become fully developed. We allow them, however, to stand.

has lost provinces and fortresses of the greatest importance; that she is exposed along a defenceless frontier to the weight of her late giant enemy; that, while Germany has been aggrandised and formed into a united empire, her limits have been seriously contracted. It is not merely that, while her resources have been largely and permanently reduced, she is now burdened with a war indemnity which will weigh heavily on her industry, and will swell a debt already formidable. Nor yet is it that she has been deprived of that reputation for martial renown which is no mean element of national power, and which, notwithstanding the reverses of Louis XIV. and Napoleon I., she retained untarnished until this campaign. Losses such as these are indeed grievous; and yet they are not the worst calamities entailed on France as the results of this war. The unanimity which was maintained in the presence of the foreign invader has disappeared before he has withdrawn; the deep divisions in the frame of the nation have

exhibited themselves in the strife of factions incapable, selfish, and anarchic; and the country seems for a time destined to become the prey of intestine disorder. As we write, a revolution barbarous in its deeds, yet utterly contemptible in its leaders, has broken out and is threatening Paris; and the feeble executive and National Assembly, without the power of an established government, seem wholly unable to cope with it. Some part, at least, of the soldiery, demoralised by repeated defeats, has shown sympathy with this movement; and the mass of the citizens, accustomed for years to submit to force, whatever its pretensions, appear ready to succumb to it. Such have been the suddenly developed consequences under the influence of national disasters, of revolutionary ideas and principles, of frequent and violent changes of government, of the dissolution of the moral bonds which hold society together; and whatever the final result may be, whether Jacobinism or order shall triumph, whether—deeper humiliation than any yet suffered—the

German army shall be called in to restore authority by the sword, the prospect for France is dark and lowering.* Must it ever be that that great nation, illustrious for its manifold genius, and animated by a genuine and intense patriotism, shall prove unequal to self-government, shall be unable to build up a settled and well-ordered Commonwealth? Time only will solve the momentous problem. Time only, too, will prove whether France, whatever the form of her rule may be, shall regain her position as a great Power; or whether, as many persons believe, she is doomed, like Spain, to a long decrepitude, convulsed and weakened by internal dissension. Of two things, at least, she may be

* To predict the future of France is impossible; yet those who complacently assert that she is for ever fallen, would do well to read these remarks of Burke, written in 1792-3, that is, a few years before the Treaties of Luneville and Amiens.

"States have their ebbs and flows. This has been eminently the fate of the monarchy of France. *There have been times in which no power has ever been brought so low.* Few have ever flourished in greater glory. By turns elevated and depressed, that power had been on the whole rather on the increase; and it continued not only powerful, but formidable, to the hour of the total ruin of the monarchy."

assured; if she is ever to recover her high place, she must learn moderation and self-restraint, and must hold legitimate power in respect; and if she shall be at last able to reconcile political stability and freedom, she will achieve more real and lasting glory than if, in some distant future struggle, she shall avenge Sedan by a second Jena, and raise a new temple to Fame at Versailles.

THE END.

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